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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RESPONSES TO ORIENTALISM IN MODERN EASTERN FICTION AND SCHOLARSHIP

BY

(C) NASRIN RAHIMIEH

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Doctor of Philosophy.....

DEPARTMENT OF Comparative Literature....

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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Responses to Orientalism in Modern Eastern Fiction and Scholarship
.....
submitted by Nasrin Rahimieh
.....
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Date: Feb. 8, 1988

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Thèse and Antithèse.

ABSTRACT

In recent decades Western conceptions of the Orient and the corresponding academic discipline, Orientalism, have come under heavy criticism by writers and scholars of Eastern origin. What unites the body of work produced by these writers is the common effort to replace the uniquely Western perspective, which often assumes a silent and inert Orient, with a more critical outlook--one which permits the East to speak in its own voice and to present its own views of cross-cultural encounters.

The aim of this study is to analyze the modern Eastern literary and scholarly responses to Orientalism in a variety of texts by Egyptian, Palestinian, Iranian, Iraqi, North African, Turkish, and Indian writers and scholars.

Early travellers to the West first expressed their reactions to an alien culture. As contacts increased, autobiographical and fictional forms replaced pure travel accounts and these, in turn, developed more elaborate and thematically introspective forms. Oriental women writers have, in addition, had to address the double dilemma of being stereotyped both from within and without.

Although these Eastern writers do allow ~~for~~ complexity in their approach to alien societies, they do not always escape the dialectic of the self and the other. As a result, they too create stereotypes of the

West. For those who are at once immersed in the cultures of East and West, the issues of identity and language are much more problematic. In such instances, coming to terms with the West can be a means to self-definition.

The most difficult challenge for the critics of Orientalism is the lack of a practical alternative to the existing manner of exchanges between East and West. While attempts at eradicating all Western influence have led to the very xenophobic attitudes which were being combated, wholehearted adoption of Western norms have also failed to bridge the cultural gap. Others, through satire, have expressed pessimism towards the elimination of all cultural barriers.

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Introduction

Dazzled by Europe

Your light is only Europe's light reflected:
You are four walls her architects have built;
A shell of dry mud with no tenant soul,
An empty scabbard chased with flowery gilt.

To your mind God's existence seems unproved:
Your own existence not proved to mine.
He whose life shines like a gem, alone exists;
Take heed to it! I do not see yours shine.[1]

In Western literary tradition the Orient has often figured as a vast realm of the imagination with no concrete geographical boundaries, in Edward Said's words "Europe's imaginative geography."[2] Since the Romantic age at least, Western poets have turned towards the East as the exotic birthplace of poetic language and the eternal guardian of all that is primitive. This Western conception of the Orient as the embodiment of pristine life has rendered the Orient at once an object of longing and a hindrance to enlightened maturity -- what Kant, in his celebration of the age of Enlightenment, referred to as Selbstmündigkeit. In other

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[1]Mohammad Iqbal, trans. V. G. Kiernan, quoted in James Kritzeck's Modern Islamic Literature from 1800 to the Present (New York: Mentor, 1970), p.82.

[2]Edward W. Said, Orientalism (1978; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1979), the phrase is the title of the second part of chapter one.

words, the Orient came to be seen as arrested in the early stages of the development of the history of mankind. The ultimate expression of this view is to be found in Hegel's Philosophie der Geschichte:

> Während auf der einen Seite die europäische Welt sich neu gestaltet, die Völker sich darin festsetzen, um eine nach allen Seiten hin ausgebildete Welt der freien Wirklichkeit hervorzubringen, und ihr Werk damit beginnen, alle Verhältnisse auf eine Particulare Weise zu bestimmen und mit trübem gebundenem Sinne, was seine Natur nach Allgemein und Regel ist, zu einer Menge zufälliger Abhängigkeiten, was einfacher Grundsatz und Gesetz seyn sollte, zu einem verwickelten Zusammenhang zu machen, kurz während das Abendland anfängt, sich in Zufälligkeit, Verwicklung und Particularität einzuhausen; so mußte die entgegengesetzte Richtung in der Welt zur Integration des Ganzen auftreten, und das geschah in der Revolution des Orients, welche alle Particularität und Abhängigkeit zerschlag und das Gemüth vollkommen aufklärte und reinigte, indem sie nur den abstract Einen zum absoluten Gegenstande, und ebenso das reine subjective Bewußtseyn, das Wissen nur dieses Einen zum einzigen Zwecke der Wirklichkeit -- das Verhältnislose zum Verhältnis der Existenz-- machte[3]

Without embarking on a detailed analysis of the Hegelian dialectic, one can deduce that the Orient and the Occident are posited against each other. The opposition of the particular (the West) and the absolute (the East) allows for ever-changing patterns in Western development, while the East is eternally and faithfully bound to its single-minded abstractions. What is also implicit in Hegel's statement is that

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[3]Hermann Glockner, ed., Sämtliche Werke (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt: Friedrich Frommann, 1971), p.453.

initiative for change originates only in the West. Therefore, the Orient is assigned an auxiliary and marginal status; it provides a point of departure for the West. In short, the Orient is that vehicle which assists in the forging of a Western sense of history and identity.

The details and manners of the Western perception of the Orient have been documented, analyzed, and catalogued by generations of scholars. There is little need to restate or to summarize the general trends of these reception studies. Instead, what deserves attention is the conspicuous absence of an unmediated Orient from all types of Western writing about the East. By absence I do not wish to suggest Western ignorance of matters pertaining to Eastern literature and culture, but rather a reluctance to allow the East to speak in its own voice.[4] As in Hegel's statement, the focus is always on the West and its reactions to the East. Furthermore, traditionally, there has been little attempt in the West to compare and contrast its own perceptions of the Orient with the Orientals' responses to the West. Despite the more recent efforts of scholars like Raymond Schwab,[5]

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[4]In his concept of Universalpoesie, for instance, Friedrich Schlegel allows for the existence of non-European phenomena but reduces their significance by subordinating them to the integrated European literary system: "Die europäische Literatur bildet ein zusammenhängendes Ganzes, wo alle Zweige innigst verwebt sind, eines auf das andere sich gründet, durch dieses erklärt und ergänzt wird. Dies geht durch alle Zeiten und Nationen herab bis auf unsere Zeiten," Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe, ed. Ernst Behler, Vol. XI (Paderborn-Darmstadt-Zürich: Schöningh, 1958), p.5.

[5]In La Renaissance orientale (Paris: Payot, 1950).

Norman Daniel,[6] and Kurt Goldhammer[7] who have examined Western attitudes towards the East in a more critical light, the exchange has so far been rather one-sided.

This absence of the Oriental voice in Western letters can be traced back to the function the Orient came to serve as the Doppelgänger of the West. Having lost its right to an autonomous existence in the Western imagination, the Orient and everything Oriental became subordinated to the raison d'être of the Western world. An example will better demonstrate the point.

Goethe's West-Östlicher Divan begins with a poetic journey to the Orient in search of inspiration. The opening lines of the Divan ring of nostalgia for a peaceful, primitive, and harmonious past which the poet believes can be found in the Orient:

> Nord und West und Süd zersplittern,
> Throne bersten, Reiche zittern,
> Flüchte du, im reinen Osten
> Patriarchenluft zu kosten;
> Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen
> Soll dich Chisers Quell verjüngen.[8]

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[6]Norman Daniel's Islam and the West: The Making of an Image (Edinburgh: University Press, 1960) is a study of the deliberate and systematic misrepresentations of Islam during the Middle Ages.

[7]Der Mythus von Ost und West: Eine Kultur-und religionsgeschichtliche Betrachtung (München: Ernst Reinhardt, 1962).

[8]Konrad Burdach, ed., Goethes sämtliche Werke, Jubiläums-Ausgabe Vol. V, (Stuttgart und Berlin: J. G. Cotta, n.d.), p.3.

At first glance this spiritual pilgrimage appears to allow for a dialogue with the East. Goethe adopts a new identity, announces the beginning of a new era by equating his pilgrimage with that of Mohammad from Mecca to Medina,[9] and therefore suggests a harmonious merging of the two cultures. In the title, at least, the poetic traditions of East and West are juxtaposed; Goethe's cycle of poems becomes an Eastern "Divan."[10]

Beyond the title, in the poems as well as in the explanatory notes, however, the reader realizes that Goethe's familiarity with the Orient is limited to translations and Western travellers' second-hand accounts of life in the East. This information further alerts the reader to the problematic nature of the proposed dialogue of the West-Östlicher Divan. It becomes clear that any attempt on Goethe's part to establish contact with the East has to be filtered through mediating texts and sources. In fact, Goethe's spiritual mentor and guide in Eastern poetry, the Persian poet Hafiz, can only reach him through an interpreter.[11]

The failure to establish a direct exchange with the Eastern poet is already reflected in the second book of

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[9]"Hegire," the title of the opening poem of the West-Östlicher Divan is the Arabic word designating Mohammad's pilgrimage and the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

[10]Literally meaning "collection."

[11]Goethe's knowledge of Hafiz's poetry was based on von Hammer-Purgestall's translation of the Persian poet's work and commentary and some translations by Sir William Jones.

Goethe's Divan. In the opening poem of this book the Western poet/speaker addresses Hafiz directly, receives a succinct reply, and immediately embarks upon his own poetic response. In this second book, as in the remainder of the West-Östlicher Divan, the Western poet speaks on behalf of Hafiz. It is, then, Goethe's secondary impressions of Hafiz's art which guide him through his journey. For example, when in "Lied und Gebilde" Goethe renounces Hellenic art for Eastern poetry, he bases his judgement on traditional descriptions of the poetics of Hafiz. In the second stanza the words used to describe Oriental poetry are all shades of elusiveness and intangibility. On some level, Goethe seems to realize that the aesthetics of Persian poetry are still beyond his grasp:

> Mag der Grieche seinen Thon
> Zu Gestalten drücken,
> An der eignen Hände Sohn
> Steigern sein Entzücken;
>
> Aber uns ist wonnereich
> In den Euphrat greifen,
> Und im flüßgen Element
> Hin und wider schweifen.[12]

If Goethe's aim were, indeed, to imitate the poetry of Hafiz, the outcome would have been questionable. However, it is evident even in the earlier books of the West-Östlicher Divan that Goethe's ultimate goal is not accurate rendering of Hafiz but rather enrichment of his own style. In other words, the poetry of Hafiz provides Goethe with the means to

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[12]Goethe, p.13.

move beyond both the Western and the Eastern literary traditions and to create a new poetry of his own. He celebrates the forging of this new style in the last lines of the poem "Unbegrenzt":

> Nun töne, Lied, mit eignem Feuer!
> Denn du bist älter, du bist neuer.[13]

Every reference to and representation of Hafiz and his poetry is, therefore, subordinated to this Goethean creative act.[14] Throughout the West-Östlicher Divan, Goethe calls upon the Orient to inspire his own art, but his well-intentioned dialogue with Hafiz, and by extension with the Orient, is ultimately reduced to a monologue delivered upon a silent interlocutor.

The persistent silence of the East, which we have encountered in our brief examination of the West-Östlicher Divan also exists in less subtle forms in numerous other European literary texts; it becomes the archetypal image of the Orient in the Western literary tradition. Repeatedly, the Orient is allotted the role of the reticent "other" who aids in shaping Europe's identity.

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[13]Ibid., p.21.

[14]Taha Hussein also sees Goethe's interest in the East as subordinated to his desire for creativity: "Even if we say of [Goethe's] Orientalism what Gilbert Murray has said of his Hellenism, that it is not unfailingly exact, this in no way detracts from Goethe's merit, for he never wanted to be Greek, Persian or Arab-- he always wanted to be himself, and to make use of everything that could further the full development of his talents," from "Goethe and the East," in Goethe UNESCO Homage on the Occasion of the Two-Hundredth Anniversary of his Birth (Zurich: Berichthaus, 1949), p.178.

The existence of this image of the East as subservient to the West raises the question of the role of the Orient in the formation of this stereotype. Has the Orient remained silent while Western writers and scholars alike have continuously discoursed upon its customs, civilization and literature? At first, there does not appear to exist an equivalent system of representation of the West in the Oriental literary tradition. Edward Said, for example, points out: "To speak of scholarly specialization as a geographical 'field' is, in the case of Orientalism, fairly revealing since no one is likely to imagine a field symmetrical to it called Occidentalism."[15] Although one is inclined to agree with Said's statement, the question still remains: what does the Orient have to offer as responses to the "Orientalist discourse?"[16]

My contention is that the Orient has never been, and is not now, a silent addressee. The absence of an Oriental voice in Western letters does not necessarily reflect total silence on the subject of the West in Oriental literature and criticism. It is clear that throughout the centuries of contact between the two cultures there have been treatises written by both sides on the general character and customs of the other. The earliest instances of contact between the

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[15]Orientalism, p.50.

[16]In his study of Orientalism, Edward W. Said has defined Orientalism as a "discourse," in Foucault's sense of the word: "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."(p.3)

East and the West, the crusades, furnish many examples to support this point.

In his Les Croisades vues par les Arabes Amin Maalouf traces in historical chronicles Muslims' impressions of the crusaders. As might be expected, the Muslim historians also indulge in stereotyping their enemies:

> Tous ceux qui se sont renseignés sur les Franj ont vu en eux des bêtes qui ont la supériorité du courage et de l'ardeur au combat, mais aucune autre, de même que les animaux ont la supériorité de la force et de l'agression.[17]

In a later phase of Islamic history a traveller like Ibn Batoutah still adhered to the notion of the inherent superiority of the Muslim conquerors. During his visit to Gibraltar, for instance, he sees all improvements as a consequence of the Muslim presence:

> Cette place n'était pas alors dans l'état où elle se trouve maintenant...Cette partie qu'il [Aboû Haçan] a ajouté est la plus remarquable, et celle dont l'utilité est la plus générale. Il fit porter à Gibraltar d'abondantes munitions de guerre, ainsi que de bouche, et des provisions de toutes sortes; il agit en cela

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[17]Amin Maalouf, Les Croisades vues par les Arabes (Paris: Editions J'ai lu, 1985), p.55, also see Francesco Gabrielli's Arab Historians of the Crusades, trans. E. J. Costello (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p.144.

> envers l'Etre suprême avec la meilleure intention et la piété la plus sincère.[18]

Early Ottoman historians also abandoned all pretence of objectivity in their accounts of encounters between East and West. The chronicler Ahmed Sinân Celebi, for example, uses one term to refer to all European nations, the "infidel," and seizes every opportunity to embellish upon the moral flaws of the Europeans:

> Zu dieser Zeit, im Jahre 897 [1491] kam die frohe Kunde, daß des König Mathias geizige Seele zugrunde gegangen und sein unreiner Körper in die Hölle gefahren ist- wodurch sich die Hilfe und Gnade Allâhs in besonderer Weise gezeigt hat- und seine Dynastie, die von schlechtem Ursprung war, dadurch ausgestorben ist; und man sagte, daß diese Dynastie, gleich einem Esel ist, dem der Schwanz abgeschnitten wurde, zugrunde ging...Er hinterließ einen Sohn namens Imre [Johannes Corvinus], der von einer Dirne stammt.[19]

This systematic emphasis on the distinctions between the self and the other is reminiscent of the European portrayals of Orientals. In other words, what both Rana Kab-

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[18]C. Defrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti, Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah, texte arabe accompagné d'une traduction, Vol.IV (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1879), p.356.

[19]Brigitte Moser, trans. and ed., Die Chronik des Ahmed Sinân Celebi genannt Bihisti: Eine Quelle zur Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches unter Sultan Bâyezid II, Beiträge zur Kenntnis Südeuropas und des nahen Orients (München: Dr. Dr. Rudolf Trofenik, 1980), p.134. In Die Frankengeschichte des Rasîd ad-Din (ed. Karl Jahn), the fourteenth century Iranian chronicler of Western history also exhibits similar tendencies towards distortion.

bani[20] and Edward Said[21] see as unique features of the European approach to the Orient and the Orientals is a rather universal means of cultural encounter. The imposition of distance and difference witnessed both in the Muslim chronicles of the crusades and the European writing about the Islamic East is, in fact, characteristic of all descriptions of the unknown. In providing the readers with "objective" views of an alien society, the observer has to rely on either the familiar or the alien. That is to say, the path to the culture, language, or civilization of the other is frequently through comparisons and contrasts. As noted earlier, in the West-Östlicher Divan Goethe sees Hafiz as his Oriental counterpart and at the same time as distinct from himself.

During his visits to France, the nineteenth-century Persian monarch, Nasir ud-din Shah, adopts a similar attitude towards the French and their civilization. It is important to emphasize that the King's diaries were at the time the only means accessible to the Iranian population to

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[20]"In the European narration of the Orient, there was a deliberate stress on those qualities that made the East different from the West, exiled it into an irretrievable 'otherness.'"[20] Rana Kabbani, Europe's Myths of Orient (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp.5-6.

[21]"I shall be calling Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe: it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other." Orientalism, p.1.

know and judge the French. Therefore, what the Shah observes in the French character becomes in the mind of his audience a fixed image of the French:

> Today we noticed a singular frame of mind in the French. First of all, they still keep up the state of mourning that followed the German war, and they are all, young or old, sorrowful and melancholy. The dresses of the women, ladies, and men, are all dresses used for mourning, with little ornamentation, and very plain.[22]

The Shah is also careful to draw parallels between France and his own country. In this sense, the reader is introduced at once to an exotic and familiar setting: "Paris is a beautiful and graceful city, with a delicious climate. It generally enjoys sunshine, thus much resembling the climate of Persia."[23]

Nasir ud-din Shah's approach to the unfamiliar culture of the French is not essentially different from the ways in which Europeans recorded their encounters with Orientals. If there is a difference, it is in the assumption of superiority on the part of the West which in the heyday of colonialism became central to the self-image of the Westerner in the East. Certain roles were assigned so that it became increasingly difficult for the East to escape its systematic reduction to a handful of traits. To some extent, the Oriental's image of himself was tainted with these Western impressions.

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[22]J. W. Redhouse, trans., The Diary of H. M. The Shah of Persia (London: John Murray, 1874), p.222.

[23]Ibid., p.224.

There was also an imitation of Western manners and customs, often originating from sources of authority. For example, the Persian Kings returned from their European journeys determined to "westernize" their country and to adopt European customs and dress codes.

In her study of Indian immigrants in Britain from 1700 to 1947, Rozina Visram speaks of a similar Oriental admiration for the West:

> The progress, technological advance and way of life of the people that Indians saw in Britain and France not only aroused in them a great admiration but also led them to some extent, to begin to question traditional Indian values...Many felt that the key to progress lay in education. Over and over again the soldiers noted that in Europe boys and girls went to school from a very early age. Many even resolved to have their own children educated. One was impressed that in England even the working classes read the papers. In fact, many of the soldiers themselves tried to learn to read and write. Many "primers" and spelling books came in the parcels that were sent from India.[24]

In the modern era, this enthusiasm for Western lifestyle has sometimes been translated into a passive acceptance of all that is imported from the West. Western influence in the East has often gone beyond importation of technological advances and material goods. As a result, the

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[24]Rozina Visram, Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947 (London: Pluto, 1986), pp.135-36.

West has left an indelible impression of its own superiority on the intellectual life of the East.[25]

Edward Said laments the submission of the East to the image carved for it by the West both in Orientalism and in his recent study of the Palestinian dilemma, After the Last Sky: "...if all told there is an intellectual acquiescence in the images and doctrines of Orientalism, there is also a very powerful reinforcement of this in economic, political, and social exchange: the modern Orient, in short, participates in its own Orientalizing."[26] The note of despair in Said's statement also acts as a form of protest giving rise to hope. Are not Said's despair, lament, and self-reproach, in fact, attempts to break away from the tradition of Oriental acceptance of Western stereotypes? When, in After the Last Sky, Said tries to come to terms, as a Palestinian, with life in exile, he is effectively breaking the silence of the East. Aware of the difficulties in challenging dominant Western beliefs, he nevertheless seeks means of asserting himself:

> What I have been saying is that we ourselves provide not enough of a presence to force the

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[25]An interesting example of the sense of inferiority experienced by some Easterners vi-à-vis the West is the following statement made by a member of the pre-revolutionary Iranian elite now living in exile, Sousan Azadi: "As a Westernized Iranian, I am aware that to outsiders there are several customs which seem to stand out as visible proof of our backwardness." From Out of Iran: A Woman's Escape from the Ayatollahs, coauthored with Angela Ferrante (Toronto: Irwin, 1987), p.33.

[26]Orientalism, p.325.

> untidiness of life into a coherent pattern of our own making. At best, to judge simply from my case, we can read ourselves against another people's pattern, but since it is not ours -- even though we are its designated enemy-- we emerge as its effects, its errata, its counternarratives. Whenever we try to narrate ourselves, we appear as dislocations in their discourse.[27]

In his questioning of the Western stereotypical image of the East and in his reproach of Orientals who reinforce these stereotypes, Said is not alone. In recent years, many scholars of Eastern origin have undertaken re-examinations of Western representations of the Orient: Rana Kabbani, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Rozina Visram, and Asaf Hussain to name a few. What is interesting about the body of work produced by these scholars is its shift from the Western perspective, therefore the dominant and almost canonical, to a more critical outlook which rejects the categorical exclusion of the East from discussions of its literature and culture. The aim of this group of scholars, who for the most part are immersed in both cultures, is, as Khatibi points out, to dislodge the domination of the Western norms which have gained unchallenged authority in the East as well as the West:

> ...nous voulons décentrer en nous le savoir occidental, nous décentrer par rapport à ce centre, à cette origine que se donne l'Occident. Cela en opérant déjà dans le champ d'une pensée plurielle et planétaire,

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[27]Edward W. Said, After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives Photographs by Jean Mohr (New York: Pantheon, 1986), p.140.

> différence qui s'acharne contre sa réduction et sa domestication.[28]

Khatibi focuses not only on the Occident and the Occidental but also on the self-image of the Oriental. This viewpoint is crucial to the "new approach" to the study of East-West relations. Orientalism cannot and must not be replaced with a new discipline called Occidentalism. Like Khatibi, Said sets the elimination of cultural barriers as his primary objective:

> If [Orientalism] stimulates a new kind of dealing with the Orient, indeed if it eliminates the "Orient" and "Occident" altogether, then we shall have advanced a little in the process of what Raymond Williams has called the "unlearning" of "the inherent dominative mode."[29]

The conditional "if" in Said's statement is indicative of the problematic nature of the task before these scholars. Their first step is to recover the Orient from the centuries of imposed silence in the realm of criticism and methodology. Hence the attention devoted to the theoretical aspects of the study of Orientalism. As we have seen, Said defines Orientalism as a form of discourse within the larger context of Foucault's theories of knowledge and power. Khatibi relies heavily upon Derrida's theories. Their knowledge of European languages, systems of learning and institutions en-

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[28]Abdelkebir Khatibi, Maghreb pluriel (Paris: Denoël, 1983), p.54.

[29]Orientalism, p.28.

ables these scholars to challenge the Western approach to the East from within. This is not to say, however, that all criticisms of Orientalism have originated from scholars immersed in European education and life. In fact, many writers and critics residing and teaching in the East had already paved the way for the most recent trends in the study of the Orient. Works such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad's Plagued by the West, are forerunners of Orientalism and Europe's Myths of Orient.

In 1962, the Iranian writer Jalal Al-e Ahmad published an extremely polemic report originally submitted to the Council on the Educational Goals of Iran, entitled Plagued by the West, in which he called into question the uncritical adoption of Western standards in the Iranian educational system. The pamphlet was immediately banned within the country and, because it was not translated into European languages until after 1979, it never gained wide circulation in the West.

In this treatise, Al-e Ahmad describes the symptoms of Western domination in his country and, like Said, laments the loss of Iranian identity:

> Today we stand under that banner, a people alienated from themselves; in our clothing, shelter, food, literature, and press. And more dangerous than all, ~~in our~~ culture. We educate pseudo-Westerners and we try to find solutions to every problem like pseudo-Westerners.[30]

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[30]Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Plagued by the West (Garbzadeghi), trans. Paul Sprachman, Modern Persian Literature Series, 4

Although Al-e Ahmad addresses an Iranian audience, his criticism is also directed towards the West. In a highly ironic tone, he repeatedly refers to "our gentlemen Orientalists." This type of rhetoric is effective in essay form, witness the ban on publication and distribution of books like Al-e Ahmad's Plagued by the West. However, such polemic discussions of Orientalism and Western influence in the East are not the only means Eastern writers have chosen to express their problematic relationship with Western influence. There exists a range of responses in Eastern fiction as well. For every Passage to India there is a Too Long in the West[31] written either in the native languages of the East or the major European languages. However, while Western novels about the Orient have already gained the status of canonical texts on everything pertaining to the East, the fiction of Oriental writers has only been granted a marginal status. For the most part, the existence of these works is

(Delmar, New York: Caravan, 1982), p.33. The last sentence of the translation, according to the original quoted below, should read: "we educate pseudo-Westerners and think in a pseudo-Western fashion."

واکنون در لوای این پرچم ما شبیه بقوی از خود بیگانه ایم. در لباس و خانه مان. در خوراکمان در ادبیان - در مطبوعاتمان و خلاصه تا گزاره همه در سرمشقمان - غربی ناب میپرورم و غربی ناب فکر می کنیم

Garbzadeghi (Solon, Ohio: M.S.A., 1979), p.36.

[31]This is the title of a novel by Balachandra Rajan, a scholar and writer of Indian origin who now resides in the West. The novel is about the fate of an Indian woman who after receiving her education in the West returns to India to find herself divided between two worlds.

ignored in Western academic circles, at best relegated to the rather amorphous realm of "Third World Literature," a classification which unwittingly promotes the separation of these literary texts from the mainstream of Western literature.

As responses and reactions to "Orientalism"[32] the work of scholars and writers such as Rozina Visram, Edward Said, Rana Kabbani, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Balachandra Rajan, Salman Rushdie, Tayeb Salih, and Sadegh Hedayat, who have in direct ways dealt with confrontations between the Eastern and Western cultures, needs to be studied in greater detail. Without inaugurating a new field of study under the title of "Occidentalism," I suggest that there exists in modern Oriental fiction and criticism a class of writing whose primary thematic and ideological preoccupation is the Western treatment of the Orient and its reflection in the psyche of Eastern intellectuals. My understanding of the term "Oriental" in this context is not limited to the writer's linguistic preferences; as intimated from the examples mentioned thus far, it is not unusual for critics and writers of Oriental parentage to choose to write in a European language. In fact, the cases in which a deliberate choice is made against one's native language so as to reach a wider audience bring much more complex cross-cultural issues into play.

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[32]In this instance, I am using the term "Orientalism" as it is defined by Edward Said.

An author's choice of a European language instead of his native tongue reflects his extensive contact with the West. On a deeper level, however, the language in which an author chooses to write touches upon the issue of adopted identities, as well as cultural and linguistic exile. All of these issues are crucial in the discussion of Oriental-Occidental relations, particularly in a period of history when the Islamic East has begun to defy Western domination in a rather militant fashion. This approach also finds its voice in Eastern literature and criticism. That is to say, in contemporary Eastern letters there exist not only different modes of expression but also different types of reaction to Western influence. My study will focus on the varying shades of these responses.

My aim is not to reduce the large body of Eastern writing about the West to neatly-compartmentalized units for academic reference, but rather to examine the area of East-West literary relations in a broader light and from a less Eurocentric viewpoint. I intend to focus on some areas of mutual concern, such as dual visions and identities.

It is clear that these issues are not unique to the situation of the Eastern writer and critic. They belong more accurately under the heading of cross-cultural contacts and exchanges which are of significance to all national and linguistic groups. Precisely for these reasons, it is important to examine the exchanges and encounters between the Orient and the Occident in a larger context, less restricted to the

peculiarities of the Western discourse about the Orient. It is equally futile to attempt to establish the degree of influence exercised by one culture upon another. My point of departure is that there has always been mutual influence and exchange between the Orient and the West. As Visram points out in one of her concluding statements, if the Indians in Britain were subject to Western influence, they too left an impression upon the manners of the English:

> It is often forgotten that the English language, that vehicle of cultural imperialism, has absorbed many words of Indian origin into its vocabulary...Indian experience has also enriched English speech with new words created out of corruptions of Indian.[33]

It should be pointed out that a study of this scope and nature must be subject to certain limitations. In order to expand the focus of my study, I have selected texts of the modern period from a number of Eastern countries by writers using languages ranging from Arabic, to Persian, English, French, and German. To avoid the problems of interpretations and re-interpretations of the originals, I have attempted to concentrate on texts which I am able to read and verify in the original languages. Most of the texts discussed in the next chapters are written in European languages or native languages with which I am familiar. However, there are instances in which I must refer to works in translation but whose significance for the discussion cannot be overlooked.

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[33]Ibid., p.193.

In other cases, when I can verify the original, I provide the original text in a footnote.

In the transliteration of Arabic and Turkish names and titles, I shall adopt the system employed in the translations to which I refer. For Persian names and titles I will use the system adhered to by The Journal for Iranian Studies.

In spite of steps taken to present a fair sample of Eastern writing about the West, I realize that my own linguistic limitations or the unavailability of works in North American libraries creates shortcomings in the corpus. I wish to stress that my work does not claim to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject matter. I only hope to provide a theoretical framework for approaching literary and critical works by Eastern authors who have directly or indirectly confronted the West in its treatment of their own cultures and societies, as well as to offer an examination of a few characteristic examples.

I have also deliberately resisted the temptation to apply labels to groups of texts, because I see the field as dynamic and constantly shifting. To fix the reactions of certain authors in rigidly-defined categories would de-emphasize the dynamic nature of the trend. Moreover, because I deal only with modernity, I have made no attempt to include a diachronic perspective which would be the subject of a separate study. I believe that, in the examination of

Eastern responses to the West, a synchronic approach allows more room for the analysis of the finer details.

That the Orient has finally "taken heed" of Iqbal's criticism and has risen to respond to Western claims upon its life and culture is evident. The East may no longer be "dazzled by Europe," but it is still "plagued" by a history of misunderstandings and misrepresentations. It is the ways in which the East has begun to come to terms with these issues, crucial to its self-definition, that must be analyzed in a comprehensive fashion if there is to exist a better cross-cultural understanding between East and West.

Chapter I

Pre-twentieth-Century Eastern Encounters with the West

> ...though they themselves <u>are</u> modern India, they don't look at themselves, they are not conditioned to look at themselves except with the eyes of foreign experts whom they have been taught to respect. And while they are fully aware of India's problems and are up on all the statistics and all the arguments for and against nationalization and a socialistic pattern of society, all the time it is as if they were talking about some <u>other</u> place -an abstract subject- and not a live animal actually moving under their feet.[1]

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's statement on modern India is of significance for this study in two respects. First, it harks back to the classical orientalists' vision of the East; Orientals are seen as incapable of objective self-analysis and require Western intellectual assistance in portraying themselves. Secondly, it confirms the timelessness of that image by presenting modern post-independence India as essentially unchanged in its dependence on the West.

What makes these observations even more noteworthy is Jhabvala's apparent disinterest in India: "I must admit that I am no longer interested in India. What I am interested in now is myself in India-- which sometimes, in moments of de-

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[1]Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, "Myself in India" in <u>Out of India</u> (New York: William Morrow, 1986), p.17.

spondency, I tend to think of as my survival in India."[2] Yet she fails to maintain the desired distance from the subject of her descriptions. Her strong emotional ties to India (her husband is Indian and she has lived in India periodically) implicate her in her own analysis until finally she speaks of India as a challenge to her identity. The title of the collection, Out of India, as well as that of the introduction, "Myself in India," outline a personal struggle to emerge from under the influence of the "other." Jhabvala's concern with "herself in India" and her attempt to reduce India to a mere extension of that self is clearly part of a larger pattern of European behaviour in the East, as described by Edward Said: "...European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."[3] But implicit in Said's statement and explicit in Jhabvala's essay is the Orient's refusal to succumb to the role of the passive "surrogate." The image of the Orient as Europe's "underground self" also suggests resilience on the part of the Orient.

For Jhabvala this resilient East is, in fact, metamorphosed into a threatening adversary. Having asserted her desire to remain out of reach of Indian influence, Jhabvala nevertheless finds herself struggling under the weight of all that is Indian. The tension is present in the two ti-

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[2]Ibid., pp.13-14.

[3]Orientalism, p.3.

tles, Out of India and "Myself in India," the first suggesting emergence and the second incarceration. This polarity also extends to the corpus of her essay:

> So I am back again alone in my room with the blinds drawn and the air conditioner on. Sometimes, when I think of my life, it seems to have contracted to this one point and to be concentrated in this one room, and it is always a very hot, very long afternoon when the air-conditioner has failed. I cannot describe the oppression of such afternoons. It is a physical oppression--heat pressing down on me and pressing in the walls and the ceiling and congealing together with time that has stood still and will never move again. And it is not only these two -heat and time- that are laying their weight on me but behind them, or held within them, there is something more, which I can only describe as the whole of India. This is hyperbole, but I need hyperbole to express my feelings about those countless afternoons spent over what now seem to me countless years in a country for which I was not born. India swallows me up and now it seems to me that I am no longer in my room but in the white-hot city streets under a white-hot sky.[4]

Even within the protective shell in which Jhabvala has deliberately placed herself she feels the conspicuous presence of India. India imposes herself on Jhabvala's consciousness in a manner which prevents her from maintaining the calm distance of the opening passages. Ultimately, she comes to recognize that she speaks not of "herself in India" but rather of fragments of that self in which, however uncongenially, India and Europe co-exist. Although she has

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[4]Prawer Jhabvala, p.19. [My Emphasis]

been conditioned to perceive differences between India and Europe, through her experiences she seems to realize that maintaining the barriers is a far more difficult task than internalizing "the other."

No European has captured the essence of this type of fragmentation of identity better than T. E. Lawrence in his Seven Pillars of Wisdom. In a passage in one of the opening chapters, Lawrence describes the tribulations which result from being immersed in two cultures at once:

> In my case, the effort for these years to live in the dress of Arabs, and to imitate their mental foundation, quitted me of my English self, and let me look at the West and its conventions with new eyes: they destroyed it all for me. At the same time I could not sincerely take on the Arab skin: it was affectation only. Easily was a man made an infidel, but hardly might he be converted to another faith. I had dropped one form and not taken on the other, and was become like Mohammad's coffin in our legend, with a resultant feeling of intense holiness in life, and a contempt, not for other men, but for all they do. Such detachment came at times to a man exhausted by prolonged physical effort and isolation. His body plodded on mechanically while his reasonable mind left him, and from without looked down critically on him, wondering what that futile lumber did and why. Sometimes these selves would converse in the void; and then madness was very near, as I believe it would be near the man who could see things through the veils at once of two customs, two educations, two environments.[5]

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[5]T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom (London: Jonathan Cape, 1942), seventh edition, p.30.

The alienation suffered by Lawrence is similar to Jhabvala's; confronted with the East, he too is forced to question the preconceptions of his own culture. Yet Lawrence insists upon maintaining the barriers between himself and the Arabs he encounters. As a result, even when he assumes the identity of an Arab he perceives himself as an outsider. If Lawrence's attitude is to be seen as typical of Western approaches to the East, then Rana Kabbani's assessment holds true: "...no European ever wished to actually become Oriental in emulating Oriental speech, dress, and habits. Nor would any European prefer the society of Orientals to that of Europeans unless...that society helped in furthering his goal of accumulating facts."[6] However, exceptions like the French nobleman the Count de Bonneval, who in 1729 embraced Islam, do come to mind.

It is evident that both Jhabvala and Lawrence fall back upon a tradition which dictates the particular manner of their interactions with the East. Lawrence, more so than Jhabvala, sees himself as the benevolent conveyor of a superior culture; his mission in the East was part of the same expansionist spirit which brought numerous explorers and tradesman to regions of the Orient. Driven by this vision, they necessarily reinforce the differences between themselves and "Orientals." The predominance of such attitudes is apparent in the writings of contemporary Orientalists like Bernard Lewis. In his account of the early encounters

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[6]Kabbani, p.89.

between East and West, for example, Lewis justifies European imperialism in the East as a historical necessity:

> During the first half of the nineteenth century, the process of discovery grew to the dimensions of a flood. Europe was no longer waiting to be discovered by the Muslim explorer, but was itself invading the Muslim lands and imposing a fundamental new relationship, to which the Muslim world took long to adjust itself and which it never really accepted.[7]

It is against this background of the European approaches to the East that I wish to examine some of the early recorded impressions of Orientals who travelled or emigrated to the West. Contrary to Bernard Lewis's assumption that "during the early formative centuries, Muslims displayed an extraordinary reluctance, grounded in law as well as tradition, to travel in Christian Europe,"[8] many Muslims did indeed travel in the West.[9] However, my analysis will be restricted to some representative texts, mostly from the nineteenth century, which will provide a basis for the subsequent study of twentieth-century responses to the West.

To demonstrate the complex nature of cross-cultural encounters, I will begin the study of Oriental depictions of the West with James Morier's fictional representation of the

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[7]Bernard Lewis, The Muslim Discovery of Europe (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), p.307.

[8]Ibid., p.91.

[9]The number of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish sources cited by Lewis in his bibliography would also seem to contradict his claim.

Oriental traveller in his novel, The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan (1824).

In the frame story of this novel the fictional Persian narrator speaks apologetically of his compatriots' inherent disinclination towards objective and analytical observation of foreigners:

> Ever since I have known your nation [the British], I have remarked their inquisitiveness, and eagerness after knowledge. Whenever I have travelled with them, I observed they record their observations in books; and when they return home, thus make their fellow countrymen acquainted with the most distant regions of the globe. Will you believe me, that I, Persian, as I am, have followed their example, hence, during the period of my residence at Constantinople, I have passed my time in writing a detailed history of my life...I think it would not fail to create an interest if published in Europe?[10]

As a representative of his nation, Hajji Baba is shown to be certain that his personal diary would be appreciated in Europe and not in his native land. This representation of Iranians corresponds to other Western stereotypes of the East; what Orientals learn by way of imitation from the West remains, by and large, beyond their comprehension.

The desire to relegate Morier's fictional account of the Persian character, "Persian as I am," to the ranks of Orientalist writing is, however, to be checked by the irony

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[10]James Morier, The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan (New York: Random House, 1937), first published in 1824, no pagination is provided for the frame story in this edition.

of the fact that "many Iranians do not realize that Hajji Baba is the creation of a foreigner."[11] The Persian translation of Morier's book became extremely popular in Iran and is believed to have contributed to the development of Persian prose.[12]

The enthusiastic reception of the Persian translation of Morier's novel and the seemingly passive acceptance of its stereotypes of Persians by the Iranian audience can be interpreted, on the one hand, in the light of what Edward Said has called the participation of the modern Orient in its own orientalizing.[13] In this case, by neglecting a level of Orientalist commentary, i.e. Morier's generalizations regarding the Persian character, Iranians appear to have adopted the Western stereotypes as true national traits.

On the other hand, one must take into account the function served by the Persian translation of Morier's novel in the evolution of Persian literature. That most Persian readers are not aware of the existence of an original text in

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[11]William O. Beeman, Language, Status, and Power in Iran (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p.238.

[12]"In 1905 the Persian text of Hajji Baba was published in Calcutta, after the English version by James Morier. The Persian edition set a standard for modern writing in the language of the people. The vernacular is reproduced with all the grace and liveliness of ordinary Persian speech. This book is one of the most important memorials in the new style of Persian prose." Peter Avery, "Developments in Modern Persian Prose,(1920s-1950s)" in Critical Perspectives on Modern Persian Literature, ed. Thomas M. Ricks (Washington D.C.: Three Continents, 1984), p.132.

[13]This is a paraphrase from chapter three of Orientalism, p.325.

English would seem to demonstrate the effectiveness of the translation. Moreover, as Avery points out, what has served as a source of influence is the prose style of the translation, not that of the original. Morier's text, as a translated text, came to play a significant role, beyond the intentions of its author, in the development of Persian prose fiction. It provided stimulus for change in the highly ornate prose style of the time. The issue, therefore, goes beyond the supposed superiority of European literature or the inferiority of Persian literature.

Literary phenomena of this kind have been expounded in the recent theories of the polysystem[14] which concentrate on inter-literary and cultural exchanges, borrowings, and transfers, while discarding the traditional notions of causal influence. The very definition of a polysystem, which could apply to any system including that of a culture, allows for interdependence of various systems regardless of their hierarchy at any given time:

> ...a semiotic system is necessarily a heterogenous open structure. It is, therefore, very rarely a uni-system but is, necessarily, a poly-system--a multiple system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent.[15]

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[14]First launched by Itamar Even-Zohar in 1970.

[15]Itamar Even-Zohar, "Polysystem Theory," Poetics Today 1, No.1 (1979), p.29.

This view of interdependent systems also extends to the role and function of translated literature within the polysystem. In fact, Even-Zohar, one of the leading theoreticians in this field, regards cases such as the translation of Morier's Hajji Baba as crucial in the development of a literature which fails to find agents for change from within. Unfortunately, however, some of the terms employed in the description of literary systems in transition still evoke a sense of hierarchy within the polysystem:

> ...the dynamics within the polysystem creates turning points, that is to say, historical moments where established models are no longer tenable for a younger generation. At such moments, even in central literatures, translated literature may assume a primary position. This is all the more true when at a turning point no item in the indigenous stock is taken to be acceptable, as a result of which literary "vacuum" occurs. In such a vacuum, it is easy for foreign models to infiltrate, and translated literature may consequently assume a primary position. Of course, in the case of "weak" literatures or literatures which are in a constant state of impoverishment (lack of literary items and types existing in a neighbour or accessible foreign literature), this situation is even more overwhelming.[16]

In the light of Even-Zohar's theories of translated text, the adaptation of Morier's English novel into Persian need not be interpreted as a sign of intellectual dependence of the Persians on the British. There exist parallels to

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[16]Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Position of Translated Literature Within the Literary Polysystem," in Literature and Translation: New Perspectives in Literary Studies, J. S. Holmes, et al. eds. (Leuven: ACCO, 1978), p.122.

this example in the history of European literature. For instance, Goethe was inspired by Hafiz's poetry in the West-Östlicher Divan, which in turn influenced other European writers.[17]

Examples of this kind serve as reminders of the complexity of inter-cultural relations and exchanges. What Even-Zohar and other advocates of the polysystem theory have suggested as a model for interactions within a literary polysystem can have beneficial consequences in the study of the nature and types of contacts between East and West. As we come to examine the treatises written by Eastern travellers, merchants, and scholars about the West, it is useful to bear in mind this theoretical framework.

One of the more interesting examples of an Eastern travelogue is a seventeenth-century work entitled Don Juan of Persia: A Shi'ah Catholic, based on the diary of a Persian emissary, Uruch Beg, who during his travels in Europe converted to Catholicism. Uruch Beg left Iran in 1599 as one

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[17]"And then there were, particularly in the Indic realm, literary consequences of the Divan...Broadly speaking, these consequences carried the names Heine, Rückert, and Platen. Especially for Rückert such consequences affected an entire destiny; contact with India furnished Rückert with a kind of genius whereby he entered the great tradition of German translators which Schlegels had rendered illustrious. Heine noted that the Divan, appearing immediately after Faust, and ushering in Goethe's final period, was a crucial example for the new literature: 'Our lyrics are aimed at singing the Orient.' Moreover, this was what he himself did, this poet who was a student of Sanskrit under Wilhelm Schlegel at Bonn and under Bopp at Berlin." Raymond Schwab, The Oriental Renaissance, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp.208-9.

of the four secretaries to the Persian ambassador whom Shah Abbas had sent to the princes of Europe under the guidance of Sir Anthony Shirley. In 1602, shortly before the ambassador was to have returned to Iran, three of his secretaries embraced the Catholic faith and abandoned their official post.

Although the circumstances leading to the conversion are not fully explained, the date of the mission suggests a conflict between the secretaries' own beliefs and Shi'ism, at that time the newly-declared state religion in Iran. Uruch Beg's own explanation, clearly intended as a declaration of faith, offers very little insight into the reasons for his conversion:

> ...as soon as I had got to Valladolid I went to see Ali Quli Beg at the Jesuit House, and no sooner had I begun to talk with him, and to hold converse with the Fathers of the Society of Jesus--religious men as discrete as they are learned--when it became manifest how God Almighty willed that a miracle should be worked in me. For I began immediately to feel an inordinate longing in my heart to seek and find His Divine Grace...as I was returned to my lodging house I urgently called upon the Fathers to grant me baptism, though no master had yet given me any sufficient instruction in religion.[18]

Despite its meticulous recording of events, the work, as a whole, does not offer any insight into the author's personal impressions of Europe. Books One and Two are de-

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[18]G. Le Strange, trans. and ed. Don Juan of Persia: A Shi'ah Catholic, The Broadway Travellers Series (London: George Routledge, 1926), p.299.

voted to a survey of Iranian history and are believed to have been inserted by the editor, Remón. Book Three consists of Uruch Beg's own narrative. Even in this section, he offers a purely descriptive account of his experiences in Europe. However, no longer fearing retaliation, he is less reluctant to criticize the customs of his homeland. For instance, he speaks of Persian poetry with obvious disdain: "The Persians pride themselves much on their poets, and these, though without art, compose an infinity of verses."[19] Yet it is clear that he still relishes his own traditions. The two chapters in which he relates daily life in Iran are composed in a less monotonous tone and offer more commentary. The contrasts between descriptions of Iran and Europe would seem to indicate that uncertainty about his fate in Europe dictated the manner of his presentation. In the final pages he is unable to disguise his longing for his homeland and his expression of gratitude becomes a means to confessing exile:

> I have now written this Book of mine more with the intent of giving praise to God for His marvellous loving-kindness daily shown to me, than indeed for any merely mundane cause. Let me therefore confess before the Divine majesty of God, how content I am to be a Christian, and I have at last lost all memory of natural pain I once felt at finding myself cut off for ever from my wife, my son, my country and all I there possessed.[20]

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[19]Ibid., p.54.

[20]Ibid., p.308.

The trend set by Uruch Beg in his observations of Europe is followed by Nasir ud-Din Shah, the first Persian monarch to travel to Europe (in the 1870s) and to keep a diary of his journey. Refraining from criticism and evaluation of European customs, the Persian king sets out to recreate in painstaking detail the scenes of his official meetings and excursions. Throughout these descriptions Nasir ud-Din Shah maintains a distantly admiring perspective, without ever abandoning the uniformity of his tone. Aside from a few superficial comparisons between European countries and Iran, in matters such as climate and food, the monarch does not draw specific conclusions from his observations. The result is an accumulation of details which become uninteresting even to the author: "the cities of Firangistan (Europe in general) all resemble one another. When one has been seen, the arrangement, condition, and scale of the others is in one's possession."[21]

For the Shah, Europe constitutes a unified mass, despite differences in language and culture. He prefers to attribute general traits to the peoples of Europe, notwithstanding his own observations to the contrary. Although Nasir ud-Din Shah does not openly criticize any aspects of European life, his generalizations can be seen as a level of covert commentary. In this sense, he is similar to some of his European counterparts who chose to reiterate stereotypical images of the Orient rather than elaborate on their own

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[21]Redhouse, p.105.

experiences.[22] The main distinction between Nasir-ud Din Shah's accounts of European life and those of European travellers in the East is that in the case of the former there was no elaborate tradition upon which the Persian monarch could rely. That is not to say, however, that the diary of the king is devoid of stereotypes. The account of the Shah's encounter with one of the Rothschild brothers in France is a case in point:

> [Rothschild] greatly advocated the cause of the Jews, mentioned the Jews of Persia, and claimed tranquility for them. I said to him: "I have heard that you, brothers, possess a thousand crores of money. I consider the best thing to do would be that you should pay fifty crores to some large or small state, and buy a territory in which you could collect all the Jews of the whole world, you becoming their chiefs, and leading them on their way in peace, so that you should no longer be thus scattered and dispersed." We laughed heartily, and he made no reply.[23]

Both Uruch Beg and Nasir-ud Din Shah observe Europe with curiosity and admiration, without revealing themselves as zealous advocates of westernization. Their attention to detail would seem to indicate that they saw themselves as intermediaries between Europe and Iran. There is, however, a clear distinction between Nasir ud-Din Shah's approach and

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[22]"Most travellers of the seventeenth century added practical observations of their own, but based their accounts of Islam as a religion, not on their own direct experience, but on tradition inherited from the medieval West." Daniel, p.282.

[23]Redhouse, pp.236-37.

that of Uruch Beg in their accounts of life in Europe. The Shah, aware of writing primarily for an Iranian audience, is more eager to comment upon European mores, while the Iranian convert, addressing himself to European audiences, devotes the greater part of his narrative to descriptions of his own country.

Uruch Beg's preoccupation with his heritage is shared by other Eastern travellers and emissaries who wrote in European languages. In Three Centuries: Family Chronicles of Turkey and Egypt, for example, Emine Foat Tugay is less interested in presenting her impressions of Europe than in supplementing the Europeans' knowledge of "family life in the Ottoman Empire among the upper classes during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries."[24] The only chapter in which she deals with her life in Europe, "Five Years Abroad," focuses upon the inadequacies of French cuisine.[25]

The apparent self-absorption of these travellers has been regarded by Bernard Lewis as representative of a uni-

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[24]Emine Foat Tugay, Three Centuries: Family Chronicles of Turkey and Egypt (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), author's note.

[25]"I had never tasted foreign food and was looking forward to meals excitingly different from anything which I had known previously. My parents had engaged a French chef...[The preliminary courses] seemed disappointing to me, but then came the turkey...The first helping showed that something was lacking. Why was it stuffed with chestnuts, and where was the rice, the 'iç pilav,' flavoured with raisins, white pistachios, and the liver of the bird? I was told that this was the French way of serving turkey and that, abroad, rice is not eaten with it. It was too much...I burst into tears and had to leave the room." (pp.242-43)

versal lack of interest in Europe on the part of all Muslims.[26] However, this is only one tendency among Eastern travellers; it is also linked with the question of the reception of their descriptions. In the later periods of contact, especially during the nineteenth century, personal accounts and translations provided the East with detailed information on the West. For instance, regarding the Arab world Ibrahim Abu-Lughod points out:

> [The] reader would have had available to him a concrete image of the political, economic and natural geography of the world. The location and characteristics of European countries and, indeed, the remainder of the world in so far as it was known to European scholars, was made a part of his own Weltanschauung.[27]

There was also a tendency among those who became acquainted with the West to abandon their traditions in favour of Western norms. In her study of the nineteenth-century Syrian[28] immigrants in the United States, Alixa Naff points out that once the Syrian immigrants established themselves in their new homeland, they made little effort to preserve a collective sense of cultural identity. Although complex networks were set up to help the new generation of immigrants

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[26]"Despite its importance for them, Muslims showed remarkably little interest in the world of Christendom." (Lewis, p.68).

[27]Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), Oriental Studies, 22, pp.54-5.

[28]The term refers to the population of the greater Syria.

in economic matters, the issues of language, culture, and identity were almost completely overlooked:

> The Syrians...neglected to study themselves. Here again the reasons are simple. They failed to develop a program of cultural preservation or to leave to their descendants a significant body of community-generated literature or private documents that would serve as primary source materials. Most notably lacking, in the thinly dispersed Syrian community, has been the absence of community unity or a common ethnic identity. Most understandable is that the early immigrants were not only poorly educated if at all but were intent on achieving the economic goals for which they migrated. Moreover, before 1940, very few of those who could write and speak Arabic would have considered a study of their community--or more likely their subgroup-- worth their time and effort.[29]

Naff's study reveals that many of the early Syrian immigrants often argued against the teaching of Arabic to their children. In response to an article encouraging the use of Arabic in Syrian households, one immigrant writes:

> I personally think, it will behoove every father and mother to concentrate their efforts on making their children better fitted with English, than to waste their efforts on a language whose only literature is myths, dream stories, and fables, and whose Classics are about the same type of stories as found in the popular American magazines as sold on the streets.[30]

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[29]Alixa Naff, Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), pp.4-5.

[30]Ibid., p.325.

The experience of the Syrian immigrants in the United States has certain parallels in the Egyptian-French encounter in the nineteenth century. In the case of the Egyptians who travelled to France, however, many returned to or established ties with their native land. In general, they were less inclined to embrace Western culture wholeheartedly.

One of the first Egyptian travellers to France in the nineteenth century, Rifa'a at-Tahtāwi provided a detailed account of French society, law, and customs for his compatriots in his Description of Paris.[31] In his official role as an imam accompanying an Egyptian educational mission to Paris, Tahtāwi perceived a need for familiarizing his country with the manners of the French. His goal was to bridge the gap between his own society and that of France. Tahtāwi attributed the differences between Europe and the Muslim world to the more advanced Western educational system: "Every man, whether rich or poor, has a book-case, as all the lower classes read and write."[32]

Confronted with the superiority of the French in the educational sciences, Tahtāwi's only recourse was to bring about changes in his native land. After his return from Europe, he became director of the School of Languages in Cairo

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[31]The original title is Takhlīs al-ibrīz fī takhlīs Parīz (1834).

[32]John A. Haywood, Modern Arabic Literature 1800-1970: An Introduction with Extracts in Translation (New York: St. Martin's, 1972), p.75.

which is believed to have been patterned after the school of Oriental Languages in Paris.[33] As the director of this school, Tahtāwi supervised translations of technical, scientific, and literary works into Arabic.

Despite his enthusiasm for the French educational model, Tahtāwi was extremely selective in his choice of elements of French culture to be recommended for adoption by Egyptians. An interesting example of Tahtāwi's selectivity is his discussion of the role of women in French society.

He is astounded by the European women's ability to compete with men in education and learning. Although later Tahtāwi himself encouraged the education of women in Egypt, he never ceased to regard European women as morally inferior to Muslim women: "They are like men in all that they do. You may even find among them young women who have an affair with a stranger without being married."[34]

In his encounter with the West, Tahtāwi would appear to have maintained a keen interest in the preservation of his own culture. Other Egyptians who followed Tahtāwi's example and travelled to Europe became even more obsessed with their national identity. In an attempt to overcome the sense of inferiority that the advancements in Europe produced in them, some looked back nostalgically to a prouder past:

> Au départ, une forte prise de conscience, un sentiment d'infériorité vis-à-vis de

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[33]Abu-Lughod, p.82.

[34]Haywood, p.76.

> l'Europe puissante et, en revanche, la conviction d'avoir eu le premier rang dans l'histoire. Cette phrase d'Ahmed le Fellah à Edmond About: 'Nos pères [...] ont créé de toutes pièces une civilisation parfaite quand tout était solitude ou barbarie dans vos pays,' résume bien des pages dictées par le voyage à Rifa'a à ses successeurs.[35]

As contacts between East and West became more extensive, there were more signs of "anxiety of influence" among Eastern intellectuals. In 1869 the Lebanese writer, Butrus al-Bustāni, who himself had travelled in the West, warned the youth of his time against indiscriminate adoption of Western standards, or tafarnuj (westernization).[36]

Among the Arabs who visited Europe in the nineteenth century there were, nevertheless, those who idealized life in Europe. For example, the exiled Egyptian journalist, Adīb Ishāq, painted an exaggerated image of French society which is clearly intended to emphasize the contrasts between France and Egypt:

> Sous un ciel d'équité, sur une terre paisible, parmi des hommes libres, là où se font entendre les concerts harmonieux d'une société fondée sur la justice, les gémissements que pousse mon peuple opprimé, sous les fouets des bourreaux, me viennent à la mémoire et je me prends à sangloter comme une mère venant de perdre son enfant.[37]

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[35]Anouar Louca, Voyageurs et écrivains égyptiens en France au XIXe Siècle (Paris: Didier, 1970), p.116.

[36]Tafarnuj literally means frankification.

[37]Louca, p.128.

It is clear that the contacts between East and West during the nineteenth century furnished the East with a better grasp of the West. The numerous descriptions of the West not only performed the function of introducing Western societies to the East, but also became a touchstone against which the East could measure itself. Some of the Indians who had witnessed the differences between England and India, for instance, held their own culture responsible for the lack of advancement:

> Indian poverty depressed many. A Hindu subassistant surgeon remarked sadly that Indians only copied the faults of the British. He did not think Indians would advance themselves "merely by wearing trousers and hats and smoking cigarettes and drinking wine." It was only by initiative, hard work and education that Indians could make progress, he thought.[38]

In its attempt to understand Europe, modern Orient came closer to understanding itself. Isa Sadiq, an Iranian student who was sent to England in the beginning of the twentieth century and was to become one of the leading figures responsible for reforms in the Iranian educational system, makes explicit the way in which travel and education in the West raised self-awareness in the Oriental observer:

> ...I also grasped something of the importance and depth of Persian culture...After studying Persian literature and history for a year my love of country was based on strong foundations for I now realised that my country had played a ma-

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[38]Visram, p.136.

> jor part in the civilisation of the world, and had nourished very great men in its bosom. It had given great literature and great art to the world.[39]

Even those who did not favour the adoption of Western customs were perforce drawn into the current which was to change the Orient's perception of itself. It is futile to perceive these reactions as effects of either westernization or influence; the range of Eastern responses to the West, even in the early days of contact between the two cultures, is far too varied and complex to warrant simplistic codification. It is more appropriate to speak of self-discovery than of "rediscovery of the West."

The argument against direct influence from the West is once again convincingly demonstrated in issues concerning literary development. Through their readings and translations of European sources, nineteenth-century Arab commentators and writers were able to experiment with literary forms which existed in their tradition but would not have otherwise flourished. Some Arab critics have regarded the use of translations as detrimental to the development of indigenous talent. Yet others like Mikha'il Nu'ayma deem translation as a mode of literary exchange crucial to development:

> Let us translate. The beggar begs when he cannot support himself by the work of his own hands. The thirsty man begs his neighbor for water when his well dries up. We

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[39]Denis Wright, The Persians Amongst the English: Episodes in Anglo-Persian History (London: I. B. Tauris, 1985), p.150.

> are poor, though we brag about our abundant wealth. Why, then, should we not attempt to satisfy our needs from the abundance of others which is available to us? We are in a stage of literary and social development in which we have become aware of many intellectual needs. These needs were never known to us before our recent contact with the West. We have no sufficient number of pens or brains to satisfy these intellectual needs. Therefore, let us translate.[40]

Mikha'il Nu'ayma's assertions find support in episodes from the literary history of Egypt. As pointed out by Anouar Louca, the development of modern Egyptian prose forms such as the essay and the novel can be traced to the age of travel: "...c'est à deux genres différents que la relation de voyage donne naissance: l'essai et le roman. L'essai n'est pas une nouveauté pour la littérature arabe. Mais dans des styles plus variés, il expose maintenant des réflexions sociales, politiques et culturelles d'une portée moderne."[41]

What can be observed on the level of literary transfer between East and West during the nineteenth century occurred in other spheres as well. However, there continued to exist

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[40]Quoted by Matti Moosa in The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1983), pp.68-9.

[41]Louca, p.241. As further evidence in support of this point, Abu-Lughod points out: "The impact on Arab methodology is even clearer. A brief comparison between the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century literature and that of the preceding period clearly reveals some basic changes. The earlier works appear to the Western reader to be capriciously ordered collections of heterogeneous thoughts. In contrast, the later works are comparatively well organized in their presentation. (pp.63-4)

a balance between enthusiasm and resistance in Eastern reactions to the West.

The nature of exchanges between East and West was transformed radically in the twentieth century as the Orient became more dependent on the West in the fields of science and technology. An ever increasing number of students arrived in Europe and North America and many more immigrants from the Islamic East settled in the West. The expanding contacts between the two cultures, however, did not put an end to the debate surrounding westernization. On the contrary, the issues became even more complex and more passionately debated.

The contemporary East is especially sensitive to the manner of cultural and political interaction between East and West. The earlier descriptions and observations of Eastern travellers have now been replaced by scholarly treatises which frequently call into question traditional preconceptions on the part of both cultures. This trend in modern Eastern scholarship itself signals the end of an era of seemingly imbalanced cross-cultural relations.

Chapter II

Scholarly Responses to Orientalism

> Ni réformiste, ni fou de pouvoir, c'était un conspirateur sans projet, mais refusant de se soumettre. Avait-il compris qu'il n'avait rien à apprendre de l'Occident puisque son Dieu était vivant?[1]

In recent decades, Western conceptions of the Orient and their corresponding academic discipline, Orientalism, have come under heavy scholarly criticism. Much of this criticism issues from the pen of scholars of Eastern origin. Although, as indicated in Chapter One, there has existed in the East a "tradition" of responding to the West, this new trend in scholarship promises to offer a more systematic revision of the ways in which the Islamic East is studied in the West.

To provide a survey of this movement, I have selected the works of eight critics from varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds: Edward Said, of Palestinian origin but now residing and teaching in the West, Rana Kabbani, an Arab scholar and translator, Malek Alloula, an Algerian scholar, Salman Rushdie, a writer of Muslim Indian heritage whose career was launched in England, Ali Shariati and Jalal Al-e

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[1]Abdelkebir Khatibi, La Mémoire tatouée (Paris: Denoël, 1971), p.25.

Ahmad, both writers and critics from Iran, and Abdelkebir Khatibi, a Moroccan writer and theoretician.

The sense of collectivity among these scholars originates, in Said's words, from their shared experience as "Oriental subjects."[2] Regardless of the methodological and ideological perspectives they adopt, their responses are rooted in personal experiences, hence the tendency towards passionate rhetoric. Malek Alloula's symbolic return of the French colonial postcard to its sender[3] is representative of much of the tone of the rebuttals to Orientalism. There is, nevertheless, in this tone an acquired balance be-

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[2]In the introduction to Orientalism, Said outlines his motivation in the following manner: "Much of the personal investment in this study derives from my awareness of being an 'Oriental' as a child growing up in two British colonies. All of my education, in those colonies (Palestine and Egypt) and in the United States, has been Western, and yet that deep early awareness has persisted. In many ways my study of Orientalism has been an attempt to inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals." (p.25) In The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey, Salman Rushdie extends this perspective to his experience of Nicaragua: "It was perhaps also true that those of us who did not have our origins in the countries of the mighty West, or North, had something in common -- not, certainly, anything as simplistic as a unified 'third world' outlook, but at least some awareness of the view from underneath, and of how it felt to be there, on the bottom, looking up at the descending heel...When I finally visited Nicaragua...I did not go as a wholly neutral observer. I was not a blank slate." (New York: Viking, 1987), p.12.

[3]"A reading of the sort I propose to undertake would be entirely superfluous if there existed photographic traces of the gaze of the colonized upon the colonizer. In their absence, that is, in the absence of a confrontation of opposed gazes, I attempt here, lagging far behind History, to return the postcard to its sender," from The Colonial Harem, trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich, Theory and History of Literature, 21 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p.5.

tween subjectivity and objectivity. To argue effectively, these writers must adopt a dual vision and play the part of both subject and subjugator. A telling reminder of the tension which lies beneath this rhetoric of duality is a passage in Edward Said's recent study of the Palestinian dilemma. In spite of his personal identification with the issues of Palestinian exile, in writing about them he finds himself adopting the perspective of both the insider and the outsider:

> This is not an objective book. Our intention was to show Palestinians through Palestinian eyes without minimizing the extent to which even to themselves they feel different, or "other."... We also felt that [the photographer, Jean Mohr] saw us as we would have seen ourselves-- at once inside and outside our world. The same double vision informs my text. As I wrote, I found myself switching pronouns, from "we" to "you" to "they," to designate Palestinians. As abrupt as these shifts are, I feel they reproduce the way "we" experience ourselves, the way "you" sense that others look at you, the way, in your solitude, you feel the distance between "you" and where "they" are.[4]

On another level, this duality of vision is to be found in the medium of expression of the anti-Orientalist manifestoes most of which are written in European languages. Primarily directed towards a Western audience, their aim is to lay bare Western misperceptions of the East. However, there is a secondary internal focus in these treatises; in rejecting the Western stereotypes of the Orient and calling

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[4]After the Last Sky, p.6.

for a better understanding of the modern Orient, all eight scholars implicitly demand a more active participation of Eastern societies in the study of their own cultures. Despite such common goals, there are distinctions in method and perspective in these studies of Orientalism.

In general, they can be divided into two categories: one with a descriptive approach which focuses on "deconstructing" the traditions of Orientalism, and a second one with a prescriptive approach more directly concerned with "reconstructing" a new frame of reference for the benefit of both Oriental societies and their Western observers. The works of Edward Said, Rana Kabbani, Malek Alloula, and Salman Rushdie fall within the first category. The second category includes the treatises of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, Abdelkebir Khatibi and the contributors to the collection of essays Orientalism, Islam, and Islamists. This division into categories is intended to facilitate the study of the movement as a whole but must necessarily allow for some fluidity of boundaries.

For basic definitions and approaches, it is appropriate to turn to Edward Said's pioneering work, Orientalism. Although Said's study cannot be singled out as the first critical survey of the Western attitudes towards the East (see Introduction), when it was published in 1978 it was the first scholarly articulation of the same Zeitgeist which produced historical events such as the 1979 revolution in Iran.

Said attributes to Orientalism three interdependent designations: 1) Orientalism as an academic discipline, 2) Orientalism "as a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most often) 'the Occident,'"[5] and 3)Orientalism as a Foucaldian discourse, otherwise defined as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[6] It is this third definition which forms the methodological basis of Said's study; ultimately, Orientalism is to be seen as an "archival system"[7] in all of its spheres of endeavour-- political, academic, and artistic. Following this argument, no Westerner who came into contact with the East or wrote about it was, or is, able to escape the discursive consistency of his predecessors. In the realm of literature this means that texts as different as Goethe's West-Östlicher Divan, Nerval's Voyage en Orient, and T. E. Lawrence's Seven Pillars of Wisdom are variants of the same thematic treatment of the Orient. Orientals are represented as Europe's "surrogate" or "underground self,"[8] that is to say dependent upon the West.

Secondly, Said argues that this timeless image of the Orient was deliberately reinforced by Western colonial pow-

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[5]Orientalism, p.2.

[6]Ibid., p.3.

[7]As defined in Michel Foucault's L'Archéologie du savoir (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).

[8]Ibid.

ers. In this sense, the enterprise of even the academic Orientalist was inextricably linked with the political ambitions of Western hegemonies. In Massignon's seemingly sympathetic rhetoric,[9] for example, Said finds the linguistic apparatus of an empire:

> ...the Oriental, en soi, was incapable of appreciating or understanding himself. Partly because of what Europe had done to him, he had lost his religion and his philosophie; Muslims had "un vide immense" within them; they were close to anarchy and suicide. It became France's obligation, then, to associate itself with the Muslims' desire to defend their traditional culture, the rule of their dynastic life, and the patrimony of believers.[10]

In the modern phase of Orientalism, especially as practiced in the American institutions, Said detects a waning of this pretense of interest in the preservation of Muslim identity. Instead modern Orientalists reduce Orientals to abstractions such as "attitudes" and "trends," further denying them an independent culture and identity.[11]

Although Said's thesis is well-grounded in historical evidence, it suffers from certain methodological weaknesses which threaten to undermine the validity of the overall argument. If one accepts the premise that all representations of the Islamic East, by virtue of being embedded in the

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[9]In his discussion of Massignon, Said refers to the following works: Opera Minora and Waardenburg's L'Islam dans le miroir de l'Occident.

[10]Ibid., p.271.

[11]Ibid., p.291.

archives of knowledge of the European representers, are misrepresentations, one wonders how it is possible to break through the discursive consistency which encompasses all cross-cultural contacts. To overcome this dilemma, Said wavers between two incompatible positions. First he adopts Foucault's definitions and insists that all representations are dictated by collective cultural preconceptions,[12] but then attempts to allow for marks of individuality: "...unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism."[13] In practice, however, aside from certain historically-determined nuances, Said finds little difference in the works of European Orientalists from the Middle Ages to modernity. His own analysis reveals that the struggle between individuality and discursive formation results in the confirmation of anonymity.

A second conclusion to be drawn from Said's thesis is the impossibility of unbiased Eastern representations of the

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[12]"The real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they <u>are</u> representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. If the latter alternative is the correct one (as I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is <u>eo ipso</u> implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the 'truth,' which is itself a representation." (p.272)

[13]Ibid., p.23.

West, for the East is also subject to a set of cultural, ideological, and religious prejudices. The question which haunts Said's study is whether cultural encounters can be redefined in a manner predicted by Said-- that is to "[eliminate] 'Orient' and 'Occident' altogether."[14]

In Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World, Said addresses some of the problematic issues which emerge from Orientalism; part of this second study deals with the Islamic world's responses to the West. In the American media's coverage of Islam (a double meaning is obviously intended in "covering") Said rediscovers the persistence of the "Orientalist discourse." Examples such as the American coverage of the hostage dilemma in Iran or the public execution of a Saudi princess confirm that the media merely reiterate what is dictated by a tradition of distorted images of the East:

> Covering Islam is not interpretation in the genuine sense but an assertion of power. The media say what they wish about Islam because they can, with the result that Islamic punishment and "good" Muslims (in Afghanistan, for instance) dominate the scene indiscriminately; little else is covered because anything falling outside the consensus definition of what is important is considered irrelevant to the United States interests and to the media's definition of a good story.[15]

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[14]Ibid., p.28.

[15]Edward Said, Covering Islam (New York: Pantheon, 1981), p.142.

Reciprocally, the Muslim East responds in exaggerated gestures, which further reinforce an already faulty Western perception:

> Muslim self-identity has...tended to be strengthened by losing encounters with a monolithic block representing itself as "Western civilization," and sensing this, the West's own demagogues inveigh against medieval fanaticism and cruel tyranny. For almost every Muslim, the mere assertion of an Islamic identity becomes an act of nearly cosmic defiance and a necessity for survival. War seems an extremely logical outcome.[16]

Said's analysis implies that for the Muslims, as well, there exists little possibility of breaking away from the dominant discourse. The best example of this double distortion is, to return to one of Said's own examples, the hostage episode in Iran. It was clear, that in the course of what they believed to be a calculated manipulation of the American media and public opinion, the hostage holders themselves became victims of the camera. As a result, both sides failed to cross the barrier of communication and fell back upon the stereotypes of the other.

Although, in Covering Islam, Said presents a more balanced description of the communication deadlock between East and West, he is still reluctant to realize fully the consequences of his own theoretical premise. That is, the Islamic world's understanding of the West is not exempt from the type of biases which are generally attributed to Oriental-

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[16]Ibid., p.72.

ism. The three remaining studies of the first category, all of which appeared after Said's first publication, follow the path taken by Said but focus on specific aspects of Orientalism.

In "Outside the Whale," Rushdie begins his argument in favour of commitment in literature by examining the recent vogue of British films about India. Taking George Orwell's "Inside the Whale" as a point of departure, Rushdie puts forth the counter-proposal that all writers and artists must respond to contemporary political issues, lest they unwittingly promote xenophobia. For example, those who remain silent about the revival of the British raj films, in fact, appear to condone Western imperialist ambitions: "the purpose of such false portraits [is] to provide moral, cultural and artistic justification for imperialism and for its underpinning ideology, that of the racial superiority of the Caucasian over the Asiatic."[17]

To support this hypothesis, Rushdie goes through excerpts of interviews with British film makers and finds in their artistic expressions a desire to revalidate the British presence in India:

> I remember seeing an interview with Mr. Lean in The Times, in which he explained his reasons for wishing to make a film of Forster's novel. "I haven't seen Dickie Attenborough's Gandhi yet," he said, "but as far as I'm aware, nobody has yet succeeded in putting India on the screen."

[17]Salman Rushdie, "Outside the Whale," Granta, 1984, p.126.

> The Indian film industry, from Satyajit Ray to Mr. N. T. Rama Rao, will no doubt feel suitably humbled by the great man's opinion.[18]

It is important to point out that Rushdie does not direct his criticism only towards Western artists and writers. Indian actors who accept to partake of the British "dream of India" are, in Rushdie's view, equally responsible for promoting a false image of the interactions between Britain and India. For him, therefore, responding to Orientalism in art or scholarship is only one form of active commitment:

> If books and films could be made and consumed in the belly of the whale, it might be possible to consider them merely as entertainment, or even, on occasion, as art. But in our whaleless world, in this world without quiet corners, there can be no easy escapes from history, from hullabaloo, from terrible, unquiet fuss.[19]

Rana Kabbani's Europe's Myths of Orient also universalizes the discourse of Orientalism. Her study of nineteenth-century European travellers' description of the Orient is set in the framework of the study of "the other." A quotation from Gabriel García Márquez's "The Solitude of Latin America"[20] preceding the text serves as a reminder of the

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[18]Ibid., p.125.

[19]Ibid., p.138.

[20]"It is only natural that they insist on measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of time are not the same for all, and that the quest of our own identity is just as arduous and bloody for us as it was for them. The interpretation of our reality

direction of Kabbani's argument: "The idea of travel as a means of gathering and recording information is commonly found in societies that exercise a high degree of political power."[21] To demonstrate the universality of these tendencies, she cites examples from the writings of medieval Arab ethnographers and traders who, like their Western counterparts, show little interest in accurate depictions of regions unknown to them.

From this broader context, Kabbani then arrives at the specificities of nineteenth-century European attitudes towards the Orient:

> In the European narration of the Orient, there was a deliberate stress on those qualities that made the East different from the West, exiled it into an irretrievable state of "otherness." Among the many themes that emerge from the European narration of the Other, two appear most strikingly. The first is the insistent claim that the East was a place of lascivious sensuality, and the second that it was a realm characterized by inherent violence.[22]

In the image of the Orient projected in the Victorian era, Kabbani detects the patriarchal tendencies of contemporary European societies: "Although there were notable instances of Victorian women who travelled and wrote about the lands they passed through or took up residence in, the

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through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary."

[21]Kabbani, p.1.

[22]Ibid., pp.5-6.

very essence of Victorian travel writing remains an intrinsic part of patriarchal discourse."[23] The Victorian male encounter of the East was at once an exercise of power and a form of outlet from the sexual taboos of the time. Like Said, Kabbani sees an obvious link between sexist and Orientalist discourse; the myth of a sensual Orient was used as an effective vehicle for subduing and dominating the East:

> All Easterners were ultimately dependent in the colonial power balance, but women and young boys especially so. Thus they served as the colonial world's sex symbols, its accommodating objects. Since the Victorian imagination could not conceive of female eroticism divorced from female servitude; since in the core of nineteenth-century sexuality there lurked all the conflicts of power and powerlessness, wealth and poverty, mastery and slavehood, the spectacle of subject women (and boys) could not but be exciting.[24]

The discussion of the relationship between power and sexuality, however, becomes obscured as she devotes her attention to cataloguing the incidents of this image of the Orient and overlooks the significance of some of the examples she has selected. For instance, the intermingling of sexuality and violence in a pictorial representation like Eugène Delacroix's "La Mort de Sardanapale" could be studied as an emblem for Europe's self-projections as well as stereotypical depictions of the East. In such paintings, the European is posited at once as the creator and the outsider.

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[23]Ibid., p.7.

[24]Ibid., pp.80-81.

While molding an image of the Orient, the European renders his motivations and desires transparent. Yet, as an outsider, the European observer is forced to recognize his failure in claiming even that imaginary vision of the Orient. This is an extension of the dialectic of the self and the other; the representations of the other can be reversed to provide an inward mirror for the self.

In The Colonial Harem Malek Alloula pursues this line of thought further and introduces a less-discussed aspect of the discourse of the other, i.e. its problematic implications for the self. Focusing on the representations of Algerian women in postcards dating from a period of French colonial rule in North Africa (1900-1930), Alloula uncovers the frustrations and the failure of the Orientalist or the colonialist vision. In a range of depictions from veiled women,[25] photographed in the course of daily life, to unveiled and finally nude models, posing for the camera,[26] Alloula displays the photographer's initial rejection by the very society he sets out to represent and his subsequent attempts at compensation through exaggerated actualizations of his fantasy:

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[25]"The whiteness of the veil becomes the symbolic equivalent of blindness: a leukoma, a white speck on the eye of the photographer and on his viewfinder. Whiteness is the absence of a photo, a veiled photograph, a whiteout in technical terms." (p.7).

[26]"It is easy to imagine the photographer moving among the models, issuing instructions on posture, and generally improving the group's photographic appearance, which, incidentally, calls to mind the passing in review of the troops so dear to colonial sensibilities." (p.34)

> Draped in the veil that cloaks her to her ankles, the Algerian woman discourages the scopic desire (the voyeurism) of the photographer. She is the concrete negation of this desire and thus brings to the photographer confirmation of a triple rejection: the rejection of his desire, of the practice of his "art," and of his place in a milieu that is not his own.[27]

Confronted with these denials, the photographer replaces real figures with easily manipulated models. The result is not only distortions of native life but also attempts to reconfigure Algerian society according to the norms of the observer. In a chapter entitled "Couples," Alloula demonstrates the way in which the colonizer's conceptions of familial setting are transposed on Algerian families; disregarding the significance of the extended family, the photographer reproduces portraits of Algerian couples as understood by his European audience. Therefore, he creates "an aberration," "an unthinkable possibility in Algerian society."[28] As such, Alloula argues, the act of photographing Algerian couples becomes an attempt to dissolve the very structure of Algerian society.

The representations of the harem, he goes on to point out, fall within the same category of distortion. As depicted by the French photographer, the harem is seen as a "hotbed of sensuality"[29] and lazy passivity. Ironically,

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[27]Ibid., p.7.

[28]Ibid., p.38.

[29]Ibid., p.86.

however, it is the photographer himself who becomes entrapped in the concretizations of his fantastical representations. In the end, he proves nothing but his own impotence: "Voyeurism turns into an obsessive neurosis. The great erotic dream, ebbing from the sad faces of the wage earners in the poses, lets appear, in the flotsam perpetuated by the postcard, another figure: that of impotence."[30]

This same logic can, however, be applied to the situation of the Algerians and, by extension, to Alloula's analysis. A parallel can be drawn between the author of the colonial postcard and his Algerian subjects; on the one hand, the veiling of the Algerian women is a form of protest and a rejection of the gaze of the photographer. On the other hand, however, as has been argued by many women writers of the Maghrib,[31] this same act of rebellion creates another form of internalized colonial submission. If a woman's veil is the only possible means of insurrection for Algerians, they, too, seem powerless vis-à-vis their subjugators. It is precisely this type of impasse which has motivated the second category of responses to Orientalism.

A common thread in this second group of treatises is their quest for an alternative to the Western image of the East-- most often found in the unifying message of Islam. In recent years, the term Islamic fundamentalism has become as-

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[30]Ibid., p.122.

[31]For further information see the works of Fatima Mernissi, Fadela M'rabet, and Assia Djebar.

sociated with defiance of the West. The return to a collective identity through Islam partially corresponds to the Western nostalgia for a past empire, in Asad Abu Khalil's definition, neo-Orientalism: "According to this paradigm, Arabs are first and foremost Muslims. All ideological and political positions derive from sectarian affiliations. Socioeconomic and political differences are irrelevant."[32] Others like Said see the resurgence of Islam only as a reaction to the ways in which the Islamic East has been treated by the West: "...I believe that even if we do not blame everything that is unhealthy about the Islamic world on the West, we must be able to see the connection between what the West has been saying about Islam and what, reactively, various Muslim societies have done."[33]

One of the most interesting cases in support of this argument can be found in one of Ayatollah Khomeini's earliest sermons, an act of defiance which led to his exile and subsequent emergence as the leader of the Iranian revolution. In 1964 the Iranian government asked the parliament to approve a bill giving American military advisers, their support staff, and their families posted in Iran diplomatic immunity. The original request was issued by the American government shortly before a large American loan was to be granted to Iran. The bill was passed with great

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[32]Asad Abu Khalil, "Review of Fouad Ajami's The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shiah of Lebanon," Middle East Report January-February 1987, p.46.

[33]Covering Islam, p.XVI.

reluctance and sparked off a range of emotional responses within the country. Among the figures who openly spoke against the passing of the bill was Khomeini. The text of the speech he gave on that occasion deserves critical attention if only as the prototype of the second category of anti-Orientalist treatises:

> Does the Iranian nation know what has happened in recent days in the Assembly? Does it know what crime has occurred surreptitiously and without the knowledge of the nation? Does it know that the Assembly, at the initiative of the government, has signed the document of the enslavement of Iran? It has acknowledged that Iran is a colony; it has given America a document attesting that the nation of Muslims is barbarous, it has struck out all our Muslim and national glories with a black line. By this shameful vote, if an American adviser or the servant of an American adviser should take any liberty with one of the greatest specialists in Shiah law...the police would have no right to arrest the perpetrator and the courts of Iran have no right to investigate. If the Shah should run over an American dog, he would be called to account but if an American cook should run over the Shah, no one has any claims against him...I proclaim that this shameful vote of the Majles is in contradiction to Islam and has no legality.[34]

It is significant that Khomeini's criticism of the bill focuses upon the opposition between Islam and the West; the restoration of "Iranian identity" is posited as a religious rather than national duty. As such, a legitimate claim

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[34]Quoted in Roy Mottahedeh's The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran (New York: Simon and schuster, 1985), pp.245-46.

against American domination in Iran is transformed into a global Islamic protest.

Such appeals were not always made by members of the clergy. Two of the most-renowned proponents of the revival of Islamic identity in Iran, Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati, were writers and ideologues who had extensive contact with the West. Although Al-e Ahmad was raised in a traditional Shi'a family, both his father and his elder brother were clergymen, he drifted away from the family vocation. Initially he was sent to a religious school, but he enrolled himself in night courses administered by the ministry of education. Later he attended the Teachers College in Tehran and obtained a teaching certificate. Like many of his contemporaries, Al-e Ahmad was drawn into leftist political organizations of the time. For a period he joined the Iranian Communist party and contributed to their publications. However, disenchanted with the party's blatant pro-Soviet stance he abandoned his official role within the party and directed his attention to a career as a writer and educator. In both endeavours he showed a preoccupation with the problems of the Iranian society, most of which he attributed to a naïve appreciation and adoption of Western standards.

His most influential work, Gharbzadeqi,[35] originally published in 1962 as part of a report submitted to the Coun-

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[35]This title has been translated in English as "Plagued by the West," "Euromania," "Westomania," and "the disease of Westernism." In his translation, Plagued by the West,

cil on the Educational Goals of Iran, consists of an analysis of Iran's technological and intellectual dependence upon the West. Using the "machine" as a metaphor for the industrial and imperial expansion of the West, he argues that Iran and other developing countries have not effectively confronted Western influence. This condition, which he calls the disease of "Westitis," threatens the essence of all such societies:

> The basic point of this book is that we have not been able to preserve our "cultural-historical" personality in the face of the machine and its unavoidable onslaught. Rather we have been crushed by events. The point is that we have not been able to maintain a well-thought-out and considered position vis-à-vis this monster of the modern age. The fact is that until we have actually grasped the essence, basis, and philosophy of western civilization and no longer superficially mimic the West in our consumption of western products, we shall be just like the ass who wore a lion skin. And we know what happened to him.[36]

Bibliotheca Persica: Modern Persian Literature Series, 4 (Delmar, New York: Caravan, 1982), Paul Sprachman discusses the difficulties of translating the original Persian title.

[36]Ibid., p.7. In the original, Al-e Ahmad cites Japan's postwar economic successes as a model for the Islamic East.

حرف اساسی این مختصر در این است که ما نتوانسته ایم شخصیت اصیل فرهنگی خودمان را در چنگال ماشین و در چنگال هجوم همه جانبه اش حفظ کنیم. بلکه مضمحل شده ایم. حرف در این است که ما نتوانسته ایم موضعیت سنجیده و حساب شده ای در چنگال این هیولای قرون جدید بگیریم؛ دست کم همچون که تا این گونه. حرف در این است که ما وقتی با ماهیت و اساس و فلسفه تمدن غرب روبرو شده ایم تنها بصورت مقلد هوادار غرب را در آورده ایم، و در دست شل آن مزیم که در پوست شیر رفته دیده ایم که چه بروز گارش آمده.

Al-e Ahmad also bemoans the lack of religious sentiment on the part of Iranians: "The mosques and the pulpit are almost obsolete and if not completely so, are only needed during the days of Moharram and Ramazan."[37] This symptom of the Iranian dilemma receives more attention in Al-e Ahmad's discussion, for he believes that religion provides a remedy to the condition inflicted upon Iranian society.

Although Al-e Ahmad holds the Iranian society responsible for the spread of this "disease," he is equally critical of Western scholars, sarcastically referred to as "our gentlemen Orientalists," who helped to pave the way for the cultural subjugation of the East. Like Said, Al-e Ahmad sees Orientalism as a politically motivated phenomenon. He, too, questions its validity as a scientific approach. Yet Al-e Ahmad's skepticism runs deeper than Said's:

> Since when has orientalism become a "science"? If we say that some westerner is a linguist or a dialectologist or a musicologist in the oriental field, that is something else again. Or if we say that he is an anthropologist or a sociologist, that is even possible. But an orientalist in a general sense? What does that mean? Does it mean that he knows all the secrets of the East? Are we living in the age of Aristotle? This is why I call orientalism a parasitic growth on the roots of imperialism. What is really amusing is that these orientalists have organizations affiliated with UNESCO, biennial and qua-

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[37]Ibid., p.44. In the original text, no mention is made of the months of Mohharam and Ramazan.
مسجد و محراب که فراموش شده است؛ و جایشان سینما هاست و تلویزیون ها. (۴۷)

drennial congresses, gatherings and such nonsense.[38]

Al-e Ahmad's argument becomes contradictory when, on the one hand, he insists upon the incompatibility of the imported Western norms and the prescribed Shi'ite code of conduct, but, on the other hand, suggests that the East's material dependence on the West be remedied through the adoption of Western models for industrial growth and self-sufficiency.

In his encounter with the West, however, Al-e Ahmad found it necessary to modify some of his earlier suppositions. He altered the tone and the content of his treatise on westernization when he was given a chance to present it to a Western audience. The setting was the 1965 Harvard International Summer Seminar directed by Henry Kissinger to which Al-e Ahmad was invited. No longer concerned with the identity of individual nations, he now advocated the primacy of a world culture. Some critics have argued this radical change in perspective was partly due to the intimidating setting of his presentation.[39] However eager Al-e Ahmad may

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[38]Ibid., p.73.

اصلاً من نمیدانم این شرقشناسی از کی تا بحال علم شده است. یکبار بگویم فلانی غربی در مسائل شرق زبانشناس است یا لهجه‌شناس یا موسیقی‌شناس، غربی! یا اگر بگویم مردم‌شناس و جامعه‌شناس باز تا حدودی غربی. ولی شرقشناس یعنی چه؟ اینرا میگویم انگلی روشیده بر روشیه استعمار. مثال حاضر را خود تان حدس بزنید. من اسم بهتر سراغ ندارم.

[39]For further details see Mottahedeh, pp.321-22.

have been to adapt his doctrine for the American audience, he did not succeed in gaining their appreciation. After his return to Iran he reverted to his initial position, which was now being taken up by other intellectuals. He found himself a leading figure in a movement which Shariati referred to as the cultural decolonization of Iran.

Ali Shariati, like Jalal Al-e Ahmad, came from a devout Muslim background. His education, however, was completed in France where he obtained a doctorate in 1965. This period of his life in France was to have a strong influence in his philosophical orientation; he was brought into contact with the works of Sartre and Frantz Fanon, and introduced to the ideology of the Algerian liberation movement. In Fanon's treatises, especially, Shariati found a framework for his own approach: "By expounding certain theories of Fanon, which previously had been almost entirely unknown, and translating some of the conclusions in his book, Shariati enabled the echo of Fanon's thought and outlook to reach the Iranian popular movement of which he was part."[40]

After his return to Iran, Shariati became a lecturer at a religious meeting hall. His popular and well-attended lectures focused on issues of cultural and sociological import. He made ample use of his knowledge of Western philosophies. Fusing them together with Shi'a ideology, he attempted to offer an alternative to the dogmatism of the

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[40] From Hamid Algar's introduction to On the Sociology of Islam: Lectures, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan, 1979), p.23.

Shi'ite clergy. In a manner similar to Al-e Ahmad, he encouraged Iranian identification with Islam:

> Since World War II, many intellectuals in the Third world, whether religious or non-religious, have stressed that their societies must return to their roots and rediscover their history, their culture, and their popular language...Some of you may conclude that we Iranians must return to our racial roots. I categorically reject this conclusion...Islamic civilization has worked like scissors and has cut us off from our pre-Islamic past...For us to return to our roots means not a rediscovery of pre-Islamic Iran, but a return to our Islamic, especially Shiah roots.[41]

Nevertheless, he believed that the doctrines of Islam should be reinterpreted and adapted to the needs of contemporary societies. He defines this approach as "new originality," or "means of finding appropriate models for each society."[42] Such means were sometimes found in unlikely juxtapositions of Western and Eastern ideologies, as demonstrated in a title like Red Shi'ism. In "Approaches to the Understanding of Islam," his discussion is couched in terms which reflect his affinity with certain Western ideologies: "Islam, as a scientific school of sociology, believes that social change and development cannot be based on accident, for society is a living organism, possessed of immutable and

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[41]Quoted by Mottahedeh, pp.330-31.

[42]Ali Shariati, History of Civilization (Tehran: Agah, 1983), Vol. II, p.262.

اوریژینالیسم عده یعنی کوشش برای دادن قالبهای متناسب به هر جامعه‌ای .

scientifically demonstrable norms. Further, man possesses liberty and free will..."[43] Or, in the essay "The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel," he integrates a refutation of Freud in his analysis:

> It is all this that makes of Cain...a creature ready to lie, to commit treachery, to drag his faith into the mud with a quiet conscience, and ultimately to behead his brother, all for the sake of his sexual inclinations--not even some crazed and powerful infatuation, but straightforward and transient lust! No, Mr. Freud, he does all these things not because his sexual instincts are stronger than those of others, but because human virtues have grown exceedingly weak in him.[44]

These treatises were not without some obvious contradictions. In a recent survey of the works of Muslim reformists, Fouad Ajami has called into question Shariati's method of effecting social and political change:

> All along, men like Shariati...had been playing with fire. They had assumed that Islam could be unleashed to bring down the old order and that its passion could be harnessed to build something decent and pretty. They had assigned to that Islamic force an "anti-imperialist" function. In their fantasy, Islam would bring down a political world tied to the power of the foreigners, and then it would blow over.[45]

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[43]On the Sociology of Islam, p.52.

[44]Ibid., p.106.

[45]Fouad Ajami, "The Doctrines of Ali Shariati and their Defeat: The Impossible Life of Muslim Liberalism," The New Republic June 2, 1986, p.31.

Shariati's career and his ambitions are repeated in the life and works of another Iranian Shi'ite ideologue, Imam Musa al Sadr, who succeded in exporting his ideas to Lebanon. Like Shariati, he "had a 'soft' modernist reading of the Shiah faith. His early discourses in the country [Lebanon], the ideas that attracted attention, that brought him fame and influential followers, were reiterations of the old themes of 'Muslim modernism.'"[46]

In his lectures and sermons, like Shariati, Musa al Sadr often presented vehement responses to Western scholarship on the Islamic East: "He quoted and rebutted the Orientalist Sir Hamilton Gibb on the compatibility between Islam and modern ideas; he ranged over Islamic history to note contributors to science and philosophy. It was a tour de force that came straight out of the literature of Islamic modernism."[47] Ironically, however, it was in the East that Musa al Sadr was perceived as a threat. His mysterious disappearance in Libya is a reminder of the internal rivalries of the Muslim East.

The movement that swept pre-revolutionary Iran, its contradictions notwithstanding, must be looked upon as an effective challenge to Western perception and treatment of the Orient. Its mere historical presence has determined the course of many academic studies of the nature of East-West

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[46]Fouad Ajami, The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shiah of Lebanon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p.89.

[47]Ibid., p.91.

relations. Abu Khalil's term, neo-Orientalism, may not present an accurate and comprehensive description of a school of thought. Nevertheless, it provides a framework for understanding publications such as Orientalism, Islam, and Islamists. Acknowledging their indebtedness to Said, the authors of this volume strongly suggest that Orientalism, and by extension Western imperialism, stem exclusively from an inadequate understanding of Islam. In an introductory statement, the editors adopt the rhetoric and the logic of religious zealots:

> Orientalism, hopelessly insensitive to the feelings of Muslims, ignores as of no consequence the historical fact of Muslim belief in Islam; whatever the Orientalists' belief, their belief remains a fact. In insisting, first, that "Islam" is a cultural artifact, and then judging it against Western norms, the Orientalists miss the cultural fact that, for Muslims, Islam is primarily an ongoing concern to live in submission to the will of God, and they miss, too, an occasion to contribute intelligently to that concern.[48]

Too often the essayists resort to the perspective of a "devout" Muslim and the rhetoric of cultural paranoia. In "Bernard Lewis and Islamic Studies: An Assessment," for example, Sulayman S. Nyang and Samir Abed-Rabbo attempt to discredit the classical Orientalist by merely citing his

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[48]Asaf Hussain, Robert Olson, Jamil Qureshi, eds. Orientalism, Islam, Islamists (Brattleboro, Vermont: Amana, 1984), p.2.

former institutional affiliations.[49] In "Alongsidedness-in Good Faith? An Essay on Kenneth Cragg," Jamil Qureshi goes so far as to suggest that only the adoption of Islam as a world religion would eliminate the disparities between East and West. The underlying argument appears to be that Orientalism must be replaced by Islam: "Whether Islam may draw and rescue Western non-belief (no longer confined to the West) is not an easy question. It depends upon whether non-believers will feel drawn to the way committed Muslims actually live, which means getting to know them."[50] Such utopian visions can be seen as extensions of the doctrines of Shariati and Al-e Ahmad; Islam is the answer not only to the dilemma of the East but also to the disillusionment of the West. As a result, what initially reads like a defence of Islam soon takes on the appearance of religious propaganda. As an alternative to the Eurocentric or Orientalist discourse, however, the essays offer little.

One of the contemporary critics who has attempted to come to terms with ethnocentrism in the discourse of both the East and the West is Abdelkebir Khatibi. Citing Fanon's call for an alternative mode of response in the opening passage of Maghreb pluriel, Khatibi sets the tone for the series of essays which follow: "Allons, camarades, le jeu eu-

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[49]"While at London University he operated as an intelligence agent of the British foreign office; at Princeton his works seem to be designed to generate and sustain support for Israel." (p.279)

[50]Ibid., p.249.

ropéen est définitivement terminé, il faut trouver autre chose."[51] In Khatibi's view, this other perspective can only be realized through a critical re-examination of all cultural biases. He perceives a coincidence between decolonization and "deconstruction"- one which needs to be further exploited for the creation of a new self-image in the East:

> Du point de vue de ce qu'on appelle encore le Tiers Monde, nous ne pouvons prétendre que la décolonisation a pu promouvoir une pensée radicalement critique vis-à-vis de la machine idéologique de l'impérialisme et de l'ethnocentrisme, une décolonisation qui serait en même temps une déconstruction des discours qui participent, de manières variées et plus ou moins dissimulées, à la domination impériale, qui est entendue ici également dans son pouvoir de parole. Oui, nous ne sommes pas arrivés à cette décolonisation de pensée qui serait, au-delà d'un renversement de ce pouvoir, l'affirmation d'une différence, une subversion absolue et libre de l'esprit. Il y a là comme un vide, un intervalle silencieux entre le fait de la colonisation et celui de la décolonisation.[52]

Khatibi further suggests that an alternative to ethnocentrism, be it Eastern or Western, cannot be found within one given ideological, historical, or cultural setting. Rather, it is an ongoing process of critical analysis directed both inward and outward-- what he refers to as the notion of <u>double critique</u>: " La double critique consiste à opposer à l'épistème occidentale son dehors impensé tout en

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[51]Khatibi, p.11.

[52]Ibid., pp.47-8.

radicalisant la marge, non seulement dans une pensée en arabe, mais dans une pensée autre qui parle en langues, se mettant à l'écoute de toute parole d'où qu'elle vienne."[53]

A pragmatic application of this concept in North Africa would undermine the possibility of recapturing an identity in the past: "Il n'y a pas de retour en soi, rien, rien que des transformations critiques, selon notre perspective,"[54] and instead promote a plurality of many already present identities: "Il faudrait penser le Maghreb tel qu'il est, site topographique entre l'Orient, l'Occident et l'Afrique, et tel qu'il puisse se mondialiser pour son propre compte."[55] Khatibi's vision requires an element of dynamic change which must originate from within.

At least on a theoretical level, Khatibi has been successful in moving beyond the initial stage of either rhetorical responses to Orientalism or recommendations for the replacement of one cultural hegemony with another. He best captures the dynamic nature of a movement in progress by suggesting that there may not yet exist the possibility of "eliminating East and West altogether," but that there is the beginning of a critical apparatus for dealing with encounters between East and West.

The arguments put forth by the critics of Orientalism, passionate though they might be, do not always insist upon a

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[53]Ibid., p.63.

[54]Ibid., p.24.

[55]Ibid., p.38.

personal note in the discussion of cross-cultural encounters. For more insight into the subjective and individual experiences we must turn to the treatment of the same issues in the various genres of Eastern literature.

Chapter III

The Gaze Westward: Fictional and Autobiographical Representations

> Vielleicht kehren wir nicht zurück.
> Jetzt sind wir hier auf engem Raum
> In einer fremden Welt.
> Wo die Menschen uns mit Augen
> betrachten, die uns Furcht einflößen.
> Hier sind wir unter einem Himmel
> Ohne Sonne und ohne die Sterne.
> Der Tag erscheint uns schon als die Nacht.
> Die Nacht schwärzer als ein Vergehen.
> Hier sind wir und versuchen die
> Tränen zu trocknen.[1]

The prototype of the nineteenth-century representations of the West, as seen in Chapter I, is the travelogue. Such depictions of life in Europe mark the beginning of a tradition of approaches to the West. This trend changed in the course of the twentieth century and travelogues were gradually replaced by creative works of the imagination. It is worth noting that the first generation of Eastern travellers had come to the West often as official emissaries and were escorted through European countries so as to receive a favourable impression. Therefore, they only saw what was carefully selected for their view. There is little doubt that European states relied on these representatives and their view of the West to advocate closer ties between Europe and the Orient.

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[1]Totoi-Mura, from Saliha Scheinhardt's Frauen, die sterben, ohne daß sie gelebt hätten (Berlin: EXpress, 1983), p.3.

In the later phases of contact, Oriental travellers and immigrants, particularly those coming from European colonies, no longer witnessed Europe through intermediaries nor did they always find themselves welcome. As a result, they became more intensely drawn into personal assessment and creative response.

I have selected four representative examples, Tāhā Husain's A Passage to France,[2] Naïm Kattan's Adieu Babylone, Balachandra Rajan's Too Long in the West, and Driss Chraïbi's Les Boucs, which describe a passage from regions of the Orient to the West and focus upon the effects of this westward migration on the lives of fictional or real characters. Because some of these works are intended as autobiographies and others can be read on an autobiographical level, in my analysis I shall be drawing upon aspects of the authors' biographies.

A Passage to France

Tāhā Husain's autobiography, Al-Ayyām,[3] is written in three parts: part one describes his childhood in the village, part two deals with his life at the Azhar, and part three concentrates on that period of the author's life which takes him from Egypt to France (1910-1922). Although Al-

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[2]Originally written in Arabic.

[3]The title, A Passage to France, is not that of the original and has been adopted by the translator of the third volume.

Ayyām is intended as an autobiography, it is not written in the first person. Instead, the author refers to himself either in the third person or as "our friend." This is an interesting example of the attempt to distinguish between the author and the character as seen in the different stages of his development. The use of this device also signals to the reader some of the psychological effects of Tāhā Husain's physical handicap, i.e. blindness. Having lost his eyesight at an early age, he felt irrevocably distanced from the outside world. In the first volume of his autobiography, he writes of his childhood:

> ...he perceived that other people had an advantage over him and that his brothers and sisters had an advantage over him and that his brothers and sisters were able to tackle things that he could not. He felt that his mother permitted his brothers and sisters to do things that were forbidden to him. This aroused, at first, a feeling of resentment, but ere long this feeling of resentment turned to a silent, but heartfelt, grief-- when he heard his brothers and sisters describing things about which he had no knowledge at all. Then he knew that they saw what he did not see.[4]

In the English translation of the third volume, the translator has opted for the first-person narrative voice. This change in narrative perspective, especially in the light of the example cited above, alters the tone of the original and suggests a different impression of the relation

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[4]An Egyptian Childhood, trans. E. H. Paxton (Washington D.C.: Three Continents, 1981), p.8.

between the author and the character of the autobiography. Yet, in the translated text, there are hints of the sense of isolation which Tāhā Husain experienced throughout his life.

In the first part of A Passage to France, the character representing the young Tāhā Husain is eager to depart for France to continue his education. Having undergone a somewhat turbulent career at al-Azhar followed by a course of study in the newly-established secular Egyptian University where he earned the first doctorate granted by that institution,[5] he believes that further development is possible only in the West-- this in spite of his conviction that his education in Egypt has been crucial in reinforcing his identity as a Muslim, especially in the light of his deep appreciation of the West:

> [The Egyptian professors] strengthened and established my Arab, Egyptian personality, in the context of all the wide learning brought to me by the Orientalists which could easily have engrossed me totally in European values. But these Egyptian teachers enabled me to cling to a strong element of authentic eastern culture, and to hold together congenially in a balanced harmony the learning of both east and west.[6]

This harmony becomes precarious when he arrives in France where he begins to doubt the adequacy of his earlier

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[5]For a detailed account of Tāhā Husain's biography see J. Brugman's An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), pp.361-66.

[6]Tāhā Husain, A Passage to France, Arabic Translation Series, 4, trans. Kenneth Cragg (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), p.38.

training: "As soon as I embarked on historical and literary studies at the Sorbonne, I realised how ill-prepared I was for them...My long apprenticeship in the Azhar and the University had not equipped me for them."[7] This unexpected imbalance between "East" and "West," as two cultural spheres, is at least superficially corrected through the narrator's achievements within the French academic system. As such, he proves to himself that there are no intrinsic reasons for a sustained sense of inferiority.

Although the distanced tone of the autobiography does not invite speculation on the deeper psychological effects of the narrator's life in France, there are hints of an alienation which pierce even through the controlled narrative. For instance, after his final return to Egypt he finds himself torn between two cultures: "I was a stranger in my homeland and I was a stranger in France. The life of the people around me left me isolated in mere externalities which hardly mattered or profited."[8] Despite this recognition, for the rest of the narrative Tāhā Husain stubbornly clings to his vision of a synthesis of East and West. He was to adhere to this conviction throughout his life. Both his private life and his public career became a battleground for this philosophy of cultural harmony. Although he was often

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[7]Ibid., p.104.

[8]Ibid., p.111.

criticized, he did not cease to advocate views such as those expressed in The Future of Culture in Egypt:[9]

> We must erase from the hearts of Egyptians, individually and collectively, the criminal, the abominable misconception which causes them to imagine that they have been created of a different clay from that of the Europeans, have been compounded of different temperaments from those of Europeans, have been given different minds from those of Europeans.[10]

In the same spirit, he declared Egypt and the entire Arab world part of the larger Western civilization and even encouraged Egyptians "to imitate the methods of the Westerners in order to equal them and to share in their civilization, its goodness and its badness, its sweetness and its bitterness, its beauty and its ugliness, its praiseworthiness and its blameworthiness."[11] At the same time, he continued to promote Arab intellectual independence in both Eastern and Western traditions. His own controversial work on pre-Islamic poetry, Fī'l-Shi'ir al-gāhilī, in which he challenged the authenticity of some narrative passage of the Korán, was aimed at gaining such stature. The contradictory nature of the two positions he

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[9]Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfal fī Misr (Cairo, 1938), translated by Sidney Glazer in 1954.

[10]Quoted by Pierre Cachia in Tāhā Husayn: His Place in the Egyptian Literary Renaissance (London: Luzac, 1956), p.89.

[11]Quoted by Brugman, pp.364-65.

advocated seem not to have been apparent to himself.[12] Such contradictions also haunted Tāhā Husain's personal life.

His own marriage to a Frenchwoman necessitated a modification of his earlier belief that European spouses would undermine and endanger the identity of Muslim men. Yet, his own wife's presence in the autobiography is limited to references to the nameless author of "that sweet voice." Aside from cursory remarks about his wife's unfailing devotion to his career, her character receives little attention. This reluctance would seem to be, on the one hand, an extension of the narrative distance which Tāhā Husain consistently applies to all levels of personal experience. On the other hand, it is an effective way of suppressing or controlling aspects of French "influence" which may have been reflected in his narrative. Like his student days in France, his French wife becomes nothing but an extension of the narrator's own personality. There is an obvious degree of artificiality in Tāhā Husain's treatises on the convergence of cultures. His intellectual abstractions, as we have seen, were not always consistent; he seemed to have never convinced himself of the concepts he advocated. Even his autobiography, despite its impersonal tone, cannot disguise the ruminations of a divided mind.

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[12]David Semah also argues that the evolution of Tāhā Husain's thought was not without contradictions. See Part Three of Four Egyptian Literary Critics (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), pp.109-52.

The anxiety which is suppressed in A Passage to France becomes much more apparent in Tāhā Husain's epistolary novel, Adīb (1935). The protagonist, an Egyptian student in Paris, is forced to repudiate his wife in order to qualify for a scholarship abroad. In his letters to a friend at the Azhar he reveals his uneasy adjustments to life in the West. Although the novel has never been favourably received by critics,[13] in its treatment of cross-cultural dilemmas it is an interesting example of Tāhā Husain's less often articulated apprehensions. It would seem that, despite his desire to bring about a synthesis of East and West, Tāhā Husain was aware of the difficulty of the task he had set for himself. The contradictions he was unable to resolve in his personal life became less menacing in his scholarly work so that he was able to project the image of a cultural conciliator:

> ...he was launched on a vigorous career in the course of which --by dint of challenge, exhortation, and example-- he provided Arab Modernism with its most appealing formulation: not Innovation but Renovation, the revitalization of a great cultural heritage by bringing the best modes of Western thinking to bear upon it, and this in emulation of fore-fathers who, in the heyday of Islam, had drawn freely on the resources of Greek civilization.[14]

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[13]See Brugman, p.275.

[14]Pierre Cachia, from the introduction to An Egyptian Childhood.

Adieu Babylone

Naïm Kattan's Adieu Babylone is a semi-autobiographical account of a first encounter with the West and examines the ensuing confrontation of cultures. For Kattan, and by extension the nameless protagonist of his novel, however, these clashes begin before the departure for the West. As many details of Kattan's biography are reflected in his fiction, it is interesting to briefly survey the course of his life.

Born into a Jewish community in the predominantly Muslim Iraq, Kattan was educated in Arabic as well as Hebrew and some European languages and closely identified with Arab literature and culture. After completing his studies at the University of Baghdad, he attended the Sorbonne and obtained a degree in literature. In 1954 he emigrated to Canada where he has adopted, almost instinctively, the identity of the "mediating minority." With ease he has maneuvered between the French and the English; while at home in French Canada (he now writes and publishes exclusively in French), he has not divorced himself from English Canada. The traces of Kattan's affinity for French language and culture are, as he himself points out, to be found in an earlier phase of his life:

> J'avais le choix entre le français et l'anglais comme deuxième langue, c'était à parité. J'apprenais autant l'anglais que le français et j'ai choisi le français parce que pour moi l'Occident libérateur était francophone. La France était le pays qui me libérait. Quand je

> commençais à lire les Français, je trouvais tout. Je cherchais évidemment, ce que je cherchais je le trouvais dans la littérature française. Tout ce que je voulais de libérateur, je le trouvais dans cette littérature-là.[15]

To some extent, Kattan's perception of France is similar to Tāhā Husain's on the eve of his departure for that country. In his preface to Kattan's novel, Michel Tournier has drawn parallels between the experiences of the two authors: "On songe à une aventure analogue, trente ans plus tôt, celle du jeune étudiant aveugle Tāhā Hussein, enfermé, au Caire dans les murs d'El Hazar, et luttant lui aussi pour sa libération, pour «gagner» la France aux deux sens du mot."[16] But unlike Tāhā Husain, Kattan's position vis-à-vis French culture has evolved in the course of his life in the West; witness the deliberate choice to pursue his career in Quebec.

He was drawn to Quebec for the possibility it offered him of being positioned on the borders of many identities and cultures. Moreover, French Canada served as an analogy for the life of the Jewish minority in Iraq. Kattan's understanding of the frustrations of a cultural group forced onto the margins of society made him sympathetic towards French Canada, and by adding his voice to that of French-Canadian writers, Kattan has become an encouraging reminder

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[15]Jacques Allard, "Entrevue avec Naïm Kattan," Voix et Images 11 (1985), 13.

[16]Michel Tournier, "Préface à Adieu Babylone" (Paris: Juillard, 1976), p.IV.

of the possibility of emerging from the periphery.[17] In an essay on the dilemma of the French-Canadian writer, Kattan alludes to his grasp of these writers' need to speak in their own voice:

> Pour prendre la mesure d'une réalité qu'il tente de saisir avant de l'assumer, le romancier du Québec doit inventer un langage et, en s'écartant de la tradition française, prendre le risque de réduire son propos à une attitude, un geste, une prise de position qui l'enferment dans une voie sans issue.[18]

It is because of the facility with which he moves in and out of the confines of cultures that Naïm Kattan has been able to fit easily into the Canadian mosaic.[19] Reciprocally French and English Canadians, alike, have accepted Kattan as the very model of the cross-cultural man. The following titles from reviews of Kattan's works underline the novelty that Kattan, as a phenomenon, has introduced into Canadian life: "Our only Arab-Jewish-French-Canadian

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[17]"Kattan's stories are refreshing in that they don't follow the mainstream of Quebec's nationalism. From him we learn the solitude of the minorities of a minority. Social integration into the Canadian society is a very difficult thing. But, paradoxically, the loneliness and the isolation of Kattan's characters make them rather similar to the other heroes of contemporary Quebec literature." Alexandre Amprimoz, "Quebec Writers: The Anatomy of Solitude," The Tamarack Review 72 (Fall 1977), 82.

[18]Naïm Kattan, "Littérature de [sic] Québec: langue et identité," Canadian Literature No.58 (Autumn 1973), 61.

[19]"I'm not Canadian just because I prefer Canada to the United States...I have become part of the ethos of what is Canada." Quoted by Wayne Grady in "The Other Canadian," Books in Canada 11, No. 5 (1982), p.9.

Writer,"[20] and "Bridge of Tongues: Why an Arabic-speaking, Baghdad-born Jew is a Perfect Guide to the Modern Canadian Experience."[21] The most insightful description of Kattan's unique and deliberate position at the cross-roads of many cultures has come from Jacques Allard in the preface to a recent interview:

> un voyageur du transculturel, soucieux de comprendre les rapports de l'Orient et de l'Occident et tout aussi bien ceux des groupes ethniques canadiens. Juif d'Arabie, Arabe de la judéité, oriental d'Occident, occidental d'Orient, l'homme de Bagdad est inépinglable; ce francophone québécois est toujours ailleurs que là où on le fixe quand on ne veut pas comprendre la richesse du désert sémitique originel. Et son discours: celui du migrant, fatalement.[22]

Kattan's predilection for the precarious existence of a man between cultures is also reflected in his first novel. The plot concerns the life and education of a Jewish Iraqi youth who, like the author, receives a scholarship to continue his studies in France. Adieu Babylone could be seen as an autobiographical Bildungsroman, what one reviewer describes as "a kind of Iraqi Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man."[23] There are enough obvious parallels between the

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[20]Anonymous, Saturday Night 1 (1979), 9.

[21]I. M. Owen, Books in Canada 5, No.12 (1976), p.5.

[22]J. Allard, "Naïm Kattan ou la fortune du migrant," Voix et Images 11 (1985), 7.

[23]Anthony Appenzell, "The Modes of Maturity," Canadian Literature No. 72 (Spring 1977), p.72.

nameless protagonist of Adieu Babylone and Kattan that an autobiographic pact[24] between the author and the reader can be taken for granted. In an interview, Kattan himself confirms the existence of an autobiographical dimension in his novel:

> Ce que j'avais transporté en moi, je voulais le transmettre. Mais je ne voulais pas le transmettre comme document, je voulais le transmettre comme ce qui était une mémoire vivante et ce qui n'était pas mort était là. Ce ne pouvait être qu'un roman. Donc il y a beaucoup de choses qui ne sont pas documentées mais qui sont pour moi réelles et vraies.[25]

In another instance Kattan speaks of the place of autobiography in his poetics of the novel: "I write novels, which are direct chronicles of ordinary life, mainly reminiscences that have some kind of autobiographical base."[26]

The two novels written after Adieu Babylone, Les Fruits arrachés and La Fiancée promise, are also autobiographical in nature. Together they form a cycle which traces the life of a young Jewish Iraqi from Baghdad to Paris and Montreal. The second and the third novels place less emphasis on the

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[24]Philippe Lejeune argues that the genre of autobiography need not be limited to the cases in which there is explicit reference to the identity of the author. Instead, it is the existence of a "pact" or an understanding between the reader and the author which determines the limits of the genre. Le Pacte autobiographique (Paris: Seuil, 1975), section 1, "Le Pacte."

[25]Interview with Allard, p.14.

[26]Wayne Grady, p.10.

evolution of the character of the protagonist. Furthermore, the setting of the first novel is particularly suitable for the presentation of cross-cultural encounters.

Behind the opening scene of the novel there is a subtle effort to paint an image of the Iraqi society as an integrated whole; we witness a gathering of students from widely disparate cultural and linguistic groups who, regardless of their differences, engage in discussions: "Dans notre groupe, nous n'étions ni Juifs ni Musulmans. Nous étions Irakiens, soucieux de l'avenir de notre pays, par conséquent de notre avenir à chacun de nous."[27] Nevertheless, there is a sense of tension conveyed both in the dialogues and the descriptions. Names and racial designations become almost interchangeable and there develops a rivalry between two camps: "A la fin de la soirée, la partie était gagnée. Pour la première fois, des Musulmans nous écoutaient avec respect. Nous étions dignes de notre dialecte...Et en pur dialecte juif nous dressons les plans d'avenir de la culture irakienne."[28] With this statement the protagonist admits to being an outsider in his own country.

Over this opening scene and, in fact, over the entire narrative hangs the novel's epigraph which serves as a reminder of the sense of confinement experienced by the protagonist: "Nabucadnestar emmena captifs à Babylone ceux qui

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[27]Naïm Kattan, Adieu Babylone (Montréal: La Presse, 1975), p.12.

[28]Ibid., p.13.

échappèrent à l'épée; et ils lui furent assujettis à lui et à ses fils."[29] Iraq, even as a homeland, is a symbol of incarceration; hence, the "Babylone" of the title.

Disheartened by the strifes in his immediate surroundings, the narrator grasps for an alternative. Through his readings of western literature, he creates a utopian image of the West and looks towards it for the possibility of escape: "Un monde nouveau surgissait devant moi. La lointaine Europe prenait forme. Dans les romans, les femmes étaient réelles. Les hommes leur parlaient, les regardaient vivre, marcher au grand jour, exprimer leur volonté ouvertement."[30] Given his longing for the "exotic," he develops a naïve admiration for Europeans. In his first encounter with a Frenchman he is awestruck, for he sees the Frenchman as an embodiment of all that he admires in the West:

> Je regardais avec des yeux avides mon examinateur: c'était le premier Français authentique que je voyais en chair et en os. Cet homme appartenait à la race de Molière et de Baudelaire. Je le dotais d'un pouvoir magique. Il n'était sûrement pas notre semblable.[31]

However, his ideals are quickly shattered as the image of the Frenchman begins to jar with reality. First, he is astonished by his French professor's disinterest in Eastern

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[29]Ibid., p.9.

[30]Adieu Babylone, p.81.

[31]Ibid., p.133.

literature and culture. This realization draws him closer to his native land and its literary heritage:[32]

> Quelle ne fut pas ma déception quand, parlant avec enthousiasme de Gibran, mon professeur de français m'avoua sans honte qu'il n'en avait jamais entendu parler. Etait-il possible qu'un Européen aussi cultivé ignorât le nom même d'un aussi grand écrivain.[33]

The protagonist's ideals are even more deeply challenged in the course of an interview with a French official who, in rejecting his application for a government scholarship, reveals that the French benevolence towards Iraq is only a means of gaining control over the country:

> La France veut conserver son influence dans le Moyen Orient. Elle a besoin de former de futurs alliés qui la défendraient. Toi, tu es juif. Tu feras tes études en France. Tu réussiras et tu ne rentreras pas...un Musulman, fils de ministre ou de haut fonctionnaire, n'aura pas de choix. Il devra rebrousser chemin...Par reconnaissance, il mettra cette influence au profit de la France bienfaitrice.[34]

This encounter marks a turning point in the life of the protagonist; he recognizes that his own image of the French, ideal as it may have been, was not essentially different

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[32]The literary tradition to which Kattan traces his roots has been described by Moritz Schneider in Die arabische Literatur der Juden: Ein Beitrag zur Literaturgeschichte der Araber, großenteils aus handschriftlichen Quellen (1902; rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1986).

[33]Adieu Babylone, p.82.

[34]Ibid., p.230.

from the French stereotypes of the Arab. Both attitudes stem from the same reductive view of cultures which forces his own community to exist on the margins of Iraqi society and to be eternally regarded as a minority. His experiences in France further reinforce these views, for he continues to suffer from stereotyping. His response to this treatment becomes much more articulate in the second novel, Les Fruits arrachés. Recalling a conversation with Albert Béguin, he reflects on his own fate in Paris:

> Pourquoi faut-il qu'on reconnaisse les véritables traits de mon visage, qu'on me définisse? Cette ombre qui m'entoure, qui recouvre ma silhouette, n'est-ce pas la mesure de ma liberté, le prix qu'il faut payer pour que cette liberté ne soit pas délimitée, encadrée, encagée?[35]

The protagonist's encounter with the West, therefore, further distances him from the utopian visions of his youth. The flight from Iraq marks a new beginning which not only does not erase the past but also cannot promise, especially in the light of the second novel, a resolution to the dilemma of the cultural wanderer. Yet this journey away from Babylon, as a symbol of subjugation, enables the protagonist to create and preserve an imaginative past that will continually be integrated with his experience of other cultures:

> Ces visages qui me regardent, qui s'éloignent, que je regarde à travers la fenêtre de l'autobus, ce sera l'Irak. Tout

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[35]Naïm Kattan, Les Fruits arrachés (Montreal: Hurtubise, 1977), p.177.

> ce qui m'en restera. Pourvu que je puisse en emporter à jamais, en moi le dernier reflet. Il le fallait. Ainsi mon enfance sera préservée, je ferai mon entrée dans le monde nouveau sans m'amputer d'une part privilégiée, sans disperser en pure geste ce morceau de rêves et de souvenirs.[36]

For Naïm Kattan and for his protagonists, who are fragments of his own personality, the West is equated with a liberating force within. Westward migration, as depicted in Adieu Babylone and enacted in Kattan's life, is a symbolic embracing of a manifold identity, bound by neither East nor West. Kattan's concerns, in fact, reach beyond real or imaginary distinctions between East and West. As Sylvain Simard points out, the corpus of Kattan's writing is a confirmation of the complexity and multi-dimensionality of all cultures:

> Sommé de s'identifier, il fait l'inventaire des mondes et des cultures auxquels il se rattache, non pour trouver une univocité du je qui ne pourrait être qu'artificielle mais pour prendre en compte sa complexité et en accepter les contradictions. La structure même des romans reflète très bien cette démarche tout comme leur contenu thématique renvoie aux sources mêmes de l'écriture katannienne.[37]

Like Tāhā Husain, Naïm Kattan celebrates all juxtapositions of East and West. In contrast to Tāhā Husain, however,

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[36]Adieu Babylone, p.237.

[37]Sylvain Simard, "Naïm Kattan: La promesse du temps retrouvé," Voix et Images 11 (1985), 30.

he does not envision a synthesis but rather an everlasting process of conflation.

Too Long in the West

Unlike the two authors whose works we have examined thus far, Rajan's fiction is not autobiographical. Both of his novels, Too Long in the West and The Dark Dancer, concern the lives of Indian characters who, after living in the West, return to their homeland unsure of their identities. The autobiographic import of the two novels, if any, is to be found in their treatment of cultural displacement and exile--matters which concern Rajan as an Indian writer living in the West.

In a chapter on Indian literature, published in Literatures of the World in English, Rajan addresses some of these concerns. In defense of those Indian writers who have chosen to express themselves in English, Rajan offers a statement which sheds light on his own fate as heir to two literary traditions:

> The intelligent question is surely not whether an Indian literature in English is possible, but what range of literary possibilities is opened to a writer using English as his instrument. It is apparent at once that if the meeting of East and West is part of the Indian experience, then English is as capable as other languages of conveying the quality of such a meeting. But the meeting of East and West must be shaped within the meeting of past and present. English must learn to accommodate the weight and the penetrative power of a cultural tra-

> dition considerably older than English...We are unavoidably at a point where many roads cross and English is not the wrong language in which to understand what happens at this point. Though the writer in English is taunted with having chosen exile, there is a turbulence that all of us must move through in order to move anywhere. In that turbulence the representative experience may be that of belonging or being cast adrift. Those who have found it unnecessary to respond to this experience may be even less Indian than the writers they attack.[38]

The two attributes of Indo-Anglian writers discussed in Rajan's essay, i.e. their ability to represent in their fiction a synthesis of East and West and to have a keen awareness of their precarious identity, become thematic preoccupations in his novel Too Long in the West.

As the title indicates, the novel is primarily an exploration of the psychological effects of the protagonist's life in the West after her return to India. Although only a small portion of the novel is devoted to Nalini's stay in New York, it is suggested that, after an initial period of psychological and cultural dislocation, she did not see herself and was not perceived as an outsider in the West. Her American suitor, for instance, recalls: "You were happy in America. You were part of the place and yet completely yourself in it, and you made everything around you a little more real by being there. Don't you sometimes feel that

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[38]Balachandra Rajan, "India," in Literatures of the World in English, ed. Bruce King (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp.80-81.

you'd like to go back?"[39] Nalini's return to India, however, abruptly changes the course of her tranquil life.

In the first phase, during her journey back to Mudalur and the early days of her return, Nalini regrets having willingly re-entered the traditional world of the village. It is dictated by that tradition, and her parents concur, that she must be married to compensate for her deviation from the conventions of village life: "she'll never fit in...She's been too long in the West...And worst of all she'll talk back to her husband."[40] Her mother's predictions are also echoed in the words of one of her suitors: "You've joined the lost generation, out of place everywhere and acceptable nowhere. You'll always be an exile and an alien, a self-created foreigner, a refugee from yourself. You can't belong. You'll live in two worlds and fall between two stools."[41] Another suitor, although not forgiving her her unintentional transgressions, sees her as an embodiment of an ideal: "You may very well be the Hindu wife of the future. In your personality Western materialism can be harmoniously yoked to Eastern spirituality."[42] Even for the American suitor she is reduced to a symbolic presence: "[Ernest] was fascinated by her because she was so

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[39]Balachandra Rajan, Too Long in the West (London: Heinemann, 1961), p.174.

[40]Ibid., p.29.

[41]Ibid., p.66.

[42]Ibid., p.90.

maddeningly intact. He wanted to crush her, reform her with reality." Forced to choose between these three perceptions of herself, Nalini passively accepts the role allotted to her, for she too is reluctant to become a misfit:

> What was the point of having been in the West, she wondered. One came back eventually to the sacrifice. Year after year millions of people like her, with henna-red feet and garments of gold tissue, would circle devoutly the flame and ordeal of marriage. Little by little the storm would break one open...One kept one's identity, maintained one's defences, and if one was well taught the struggle was only longer, the pain of acceptance more drawn out and acute.[43]

At the decisive moment, however, Nalini acts independently and, in so doing, seems to overcome the inner conflicts from which she has suffered. She takes it upon herself to choose from among the suitors whose lengthy stay in the village has caused an uprising among the nervous villagers. Her decision to marry the instigator of the riots is an act in which her identity is sealed. She turns down her American suitor, thereby rejecting a return to the West which no longer symbolizes freedom and the possibility of synthesis. If anything, Ernest's destruction of the bridge which connects the village to the outside world stands as a symbol of his inability, and by extension the West's inability, to bring about a synthesis of the two traditions. In contrast to Ernest, Nalini does emerge from her double

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[43]Ibid., p.105.

dilemma. While turning away from the West, she refuses an unconditional acceptance of her own tradition. The changes in her husband's character as well as the life of the village are witness to Nalini's compromise between the two worlds:

> The choice was inexplicable and should have been calamitous; but thanks to the lady's golden touch it had, on the contrary, become the cornerstone of the prosperity of the village. Under her guidance her husband had abandoned his profession and turned to another which made striking use of his bizarre but undeniable talents.[44]

Critics have often taken Nalini's final decision for an abrupt deus ex machina. George Woodcock, for instance, finds an explanation for the seemingly unmotivated ending of the novel in Rajan's scholarly works:

> It is with the view that they are part of the same "meaningful world" as emerges from Rajan's criticism of Milton, Yeats and Eliot that I approach his two novels. I am not suggesting that The Dark Dancer is Rajan's version of Paradise Lost or Too Long in the West his version of Paradise Regained. Yet one novel is about loss and the other about recovery, and their endings carry haunting echoes of Milton's major works. For Too Long in the West actually ends with the very words of "Paradise" as a stranger makes his pilgrimage to the blessed village of Mudalur where the novel has been enacted.[45]

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[44]Ibid., p.229.

[45]George Woodcock, "Balachandra Rajan: The Critic as Novelist," World Literature Written in English 23 (1984), 443.

Suggesting these similarities, Woodcock then interprets Nalini's fate and the ending of the novel as an overlaying of two different modes of writing:

> Nalini has achieved her "disengagement" from the predicament of East and West by "recognition" of her situation, and "all that makes life seem meaningless" has been successfully confronted in the true comic manner with the unknotting of complexities, the surprising resolution that can be called poetic because it exists only in the imagination.[46]

I have suggested an alternative interpretation of the ending in the light of Rajan's statements on the dilemmas of Indo-Anglian writers. It is Rajan's desire to bring Nalini's inner turmoil to a perfect resolution which forces him to defy narrative logic and impose an abrupt denouement on the novel. Re-reading the novel from the end to the beginning, the events of the final chapter are clearly foreshadowed. When Nalini first returns to the village, she is seen longing for the West. Yet, in a reported inner monologue, impulse is replaced by careful self-control:

> ...in a sense she had been liberated by her three years in America, but though she realised what had happened even while it was happening, she was too well-balanced to be overthrown by her freedom. Her independence became more shapely and vigorous...And she was coming back to it a different person. She had to be ready for the shock of strangeness and not give herself up be-

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[46]Ibid., 451.

> cause the young always gave way; or rebel so violently that she trod on others' dreams. She had been trained well and she would have to walk the tightrope.[47]

The ending of the novel would seem to be an enactment of Nalini's resolve to "walk the tightrope" of identity. The novel indeed has a poetic ending, in the sense explained by Woodcock, and its artificiality suggests that resolutions of this nature are far from being realized. Even within the realm of the novel the resolution is presented as precarious. The violence and the natural disasters of the final chapters are symbolic reflections of the inner "turbulence" which Nalini must continually suffer. This means, especially in the context of Rajan's essay, that the type of fusion of cultures he envisions will never be without tension.

Les Boucs

In Chraïbi's novel, confrontation is presented as the only means through which East and West can meet. Although Les Boucs belongs to an earlier phase of Chraïbi's career, in a postface written twenty years after the first publication of the novel, he still holds to the convictions which motivated the creation of his work:

> La question m'a été posée--et je me la suis posée: suis-je encore capable, vingt ans après, d'en écrire un tel

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[47]Too Long in the West, p.83.

> livre, aussi atroce? Il m'est difficile d'y répondre, sinon par une autre question: vingt ans après, le racisme existe-il encore en France? Les immigrés qui continuent de venir travailler dans ce pays "hautement civilisé" sont-ils encore parqués à la lisière de la société et de l'humain? Est-il toujours vrai, selon mon maître Camus, que la bacille de la peste ne meurt ni ne disparaît jamais?[48]

There are no idealized images of the West in Chraïbi's novel. For the protagonist, Yalaan Waldik,[49] an aspiring Algerian writer, the West represents rejection, suffering, and alienation. After his arrival in France, that is after the initial entrapment in the vision of the colonizer, he no longer sees the West as an ideal refuge. The berber shoeshine boy, who believes a French priest's promise of hope and gives up all of his possessions to leave for France, realizes that for the French he will always remain an imitator of their civilization:

> Mac n'a peut-être rien dit de tout cela. N'en a même rien pensé. Mais je l'entendais: Il ne travaille même pas, disait-il. Il prend ses désirs pour des réalités; j'ai souvent relu ses lettres. Le cas typique d'un intellectuel ou plutôt d'un néo-intellectuel venant d'un autre continent, d'une autre somme d'histoire. Maniant avec quelque aisance notre langue et nos avocasseries européenes, mais uniquement cela...il a la prétention, l'ambition, la naïveté de vouloir (ses

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[48]Driss Chraïbi, Les Boucs (Paris: Denoël, 1976), p.195.

[49]The name literally means, "May he who sired you be damned."

> lettres le dénotent clairement) imposer l'Orient en Europe.[50]

In France even his most intimate relationships are determined by the set of stereotypes which have encompassed all North Africans. His French lover, Simone, cannot see him outside the framework of these stereotypes. Her hatred of North Africans is an instinctive reaction which strips her of her humanity:

> Aux commissures de ses lèvres il y avait un filet d'écume et je la vis telle qu'en elle-même la nature la changeait--tares, avatars, éducation, civilisation, refoulements, quinze siècles de suprématie européene, tout s'était englouti en un instant--une bonne vieille haine exempte de brimborions: chair, organes, instincts.[51]

It is the same instinct which reduces the plight of North Africans in France to what Waldik with irony describes as "twenty thousand tons of suffering." By speaking on their behalf, Waldik assumes the role of a representative. It is as if, through the act of writing, he hoped to bridge the gap between the two sides. Yet the rejection of his manuscript by the French editor renders the task impossible. The fate of North Africans remains, therefore, unchanged. This is mirrored in the last episode of the novel, which describes the meeting between the berber and the French

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[50]Ibid., pp.75-6.

[51]Ibid., p.44.

priest. In this scene Chraïbi sets up a bad infinity which imitates the course of history:

> Un petit Berbère cirait des souliers à Bône. Ils étaient noirs et appartenaient à un prêtre. --Comment t'appelles-tu? lui demanda le prêtre. --Yalaan Waldik, dit le Berbère. --Que fais-tu et quel âge as-tu, mon enfant? --Je suis cireur et j'ai dix ans. Le prêtre poussa un soupir...--Considère, mon enfant, dit-il. Si tu étais en France, tu apprendrais déjà le latin et le grec et dans dix ans tu serais un homme. Longtemps, le petit Berbère le regarda, stupéfait..il ferma sa boîte de cireur comme on ferme la porte d'un passé--et s'en alla...Et le prêtre dit à voix haute: --J'ai sauvé une âme.[52]

What is laid bare in this passage is not only the fallacy of the mission civilisatrice but also the naïveté of the North Africans. Allowing themselves to be seduced by false promises, they are equally blamed for the fate they suffer in France.[53] However, this does not diminish the responsibility of the colonizer who stubbornly refuses to admit to defeat. The French society's refusal to come to terms with the North African dilemma is, in Chraïbi's view, a reflection of their inability to recognize their own failures.

In Chraïbi's novel, coming to terms with the West is not merely represented by an effort to maintain a position

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[52]Ibid., pp.193-4.

[53]Similar sentiments are reflected in Isabelle's remarks to Waldik: "-Exploitation de l'Arabe par l'Européen, oui martela-t-elle avec un rire aigu. Je le condamne certes...Oui j'ai honte d'être une Européenne- Mais c'est vous, Nord-Africains, que je condamne le plus. Parce que vous vous êtes toujours laissés faire." (p.181)

between two worlds but also by a bitter struggle for daily survival. Chraïbi's disgust with the French treatment of the inhabitants of their former North African colonies is crudely, but perhaps most effectively, expressed in the description of a meal of fried mice and rats shared by Waldik and Raus.[54] The anger and the violence of Les Boucs, directed towards Europe, is to some extent the outward expression of the tensions present in the preceding novels.

In a recent interview Chraïbi reiterates the necessity of bridging cultural gaps: "J'ai la fierté, de vouloir réussir là où les politiques se sont cassé les dents, c'est-à-dire établir un pont entre deux cultures."[55] If Yalaan Waldik is to be seen as a reflection of the author, his task must remain open-ended; his text is a step towards eliminating the confrontations which determine the tone of the novel. However, confrontation must not necessarily be seen in an unfavourable light. As viewed by Rajan, it can also lead to fruitful forms of action.

In four works which we have examined in this chapter, the West has been portrayed as an object of an imaginative longing, a haven for intellectual development, a threat to one's identity, and the place of realization of most bitter disappointments. In other words, there does not exist a singular "image" of the West in modern Eastern fiction. This

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[54]Ibid., p.14.

[55]Interview by Lionel Dubois, Revue Celfan Review 5 (1986), 21.

very absence of uniformity in Eastern representations of the West is indicative of modern Eastern writers' reluctance to fit other peoples and cultures into fixed and static images. However, this is far from saying that stereotyping does not exist in the East. Nor is it possible to suggest that those Easterners who are aware of having been perceived as "Oriental subjects" are less inclined towards stereotyping others within their own culture. In some instances, as in the case of Oriental women, those same "subjects" appear to have fully and indiscriminately internalized Western attitudes towards their own societies.

Chapter IV

The Double Dilemma of Oriental Women

> Und die Frauen,
> Unsere Frauen:
> mit ihren unheimlichen und glücklichen Händen,
> mit ihren zierlichen, kleinen Kinnen, ihren großen
> Augen, unsere Mutter, unser Weib, unsere Geliebte.
> Frauen, die sterben, ohne daß sie gelebt hätten.[1]

That the experience of Oriental women in the West needs to be treated separately might at first seem unjustified, for the Western image of the East encompasses men and women alike. But traditionally Oriental women have been subjected to an even more demeaning set of stereotypes. We need only recall a figure such as Flaubert's Kuchuk Hanem to confirm that Oriental women are particularly vulnerable to the Orientalist vision of the East. In Orientalism, Edward Said has argued that the Orientalists' treatment of Eastern women has always been integral to the very logic of their discourse:

> Orientalism itself...was an exclusively male province; like so many professional guilds during the modern period, it viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders. This is especially evident in the writing of travelers and novelists: women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sen-

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[1]Nazim Hikmet, quoted in Saliha Scheinhardt's Frauen, die sterben, ohne daß sie gelebt hätten (Berlin: EXpress, 1983), pp.21-2.

> suality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing.[2]

This interdependence of the sexist perspective and the Western stereotypes of the East, as seen in the previous chapter, becomes the focus of Rana Kabbani's Europe's Myths of Orient. In her analysis of Burton's treatment of the Orient, for instance, Kabbani unveils the patriarchal tendencies of Orientalism which lead to the "double dilemma" of Oriental women:

> The Orient for Burton was chiefly an illicit space and its women convenient chattels who offered sexual gratification denied in the Victorian home for its unseemliness. The articulation of sexism in his narrative went hand in hand with the articulation of racism, for women were a sub-group in patriarchal Victorian society just as other races were sub-groups within the colonial enterprise. Oriental women were thus doubly demeaned (as women, and as "Orientals") whilst being curiously sublimated.[3]

This myth of Oriental woman is not to be found only in narratives. The type of distortion to which Kabbani refers[4] also spread to other forms of representation. In The Colonial Harem, Malek Alloula has demonstrated the way in which,

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[2]Orientalism, p.207.

[3]Kabbani, p.7.

[4]"The Arabian Nights was manipulated into an occasion for a sexual discourse, and the tales became valuable as text to be annotated and augmented. From being the belle dame of Galland's salon, Scheherazade changed into the gay woman of Burton's club, for private subscription only." (p.36)

by manipulating the image of Algerian women in the French colonial postcard, the colonizing forces believed to have succeeded in breaking down the very structures of Algerian society. It is interesting to note that Algerian men also shared this view of the colonizer, for they too considered women their exclusive property. The French colonial photographers obviously relied upon the Algerians to partake of the same perception of women. In other words, the male Orientals contributed, albeit indirectly, as much to the creation of the myth of Oriental woman as did Europeans. With this perspective in mind, I wish to redefine Kabbani's "double demeaning" of Oriental women. This term, as it will become evident in the course of this analysis, best refers to the simultaneous stereotyping of Oriental women by the West and the East.

Women in the East have spoken against their own cultures' rather primitive view of women. If we allow a momentary digression to examine a few examples which demonstrate Eastern women's plight in their native lands, we will better grasp the "double dilemma" of Oriental women to be studied in texts devoted to their experiences abroad.

In her poem, "Tears," the Syrian poet Saniyya Saleh articulates what is, at least now, recognized as a universal problem for women in all cultures, i.e, being excluded from certain realms of society. But what makes her poem particularly interesting for this analysis is its emphasis on the forced suppression of a desire to rebel:

There is a scream that binds my heart to the throat
of the Earth
And that foam is
my lost voice.

My robe illusion
My necklace of counterfeit stone
All that is the world may be
deceit
but my tears.

I am the woman bleeding the sharpened years
I come and go behind
Tall windows.
a woman in veils about to flee
My childhood smashed by this
nightmare.[5]

The image of the woman behind "tall windows"[6] brings to mind some of the representations of women in the French colonial postcards.[7] The context in which Saniyya Saleh's poem was written can in no way be related to the experience of the colonized Algerian women, yet the recurrence of the same images suggests that there is little difference between the European and the Oriental perception of women.

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[5]Kamal Boullata, ed. Women of the Fertile Crescent: An Anthology of Modern Poetry by Arab Women (1978; rpt. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1981), p.205.

[6]This same image is found in the Egyptian writer Ihsan Kamal's short story, "A Jailhouse of My Own": "I do not know why every time I passed in front of the Hadara prison, when I was a child, a tremor ran through my body, and I was filled with pity for the inmates shut behind those high grim walls. Perhaps it was a foreboding of the twenty years I was to spend in another prison, later on. I had committed no crime, unless it is a crime to marry for which the penalty is a life sentence." In Arabic Short Stories 1945-1965, ed. Mahmoud Manzaloui (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1985), p.304.

[7]Chapter three, "Women's Prisons," and the photographs on pp.19, 20, 22-3.

In her poetry, the Iranian poet, Furugh Farukhzad, also defied tradition and voiced her dissatisfaction with the dominant male perspective with which she, as a poet, was required to comply. The very titles of her collection of poems, Prisoner, The Wall, and Rebellion, reflect her sentiments vis-à-vis her tradition. Repeatedly she was chastised for questioning the treatment of women in her society.[8] The following poem, entitled "A Cold Season," was highly criticized even by her contemporaries for its bold and challenging images:

> And this is I
> A lonely woman
> On the threshold of a cold season
> At the beginning of the understanding of the contaminated existence of the earth.
> And the simple despair and sadness of the sky
> And the weakness of these cemented hands.
>
> On the threshold of a cold season
> In the circles of the mourning mirrors
> And the mournful society of these pale experiences
> And the sunset being pregnant with the knowledge of silence
> How is it possible to command someone who goes so patient, heavy, wondering, to stop.
> How is it possible to say to man that he is not alive, has never been alive.
>
> Dear stars
> Dear cardboard stars
> When lies billow in the sky
> Then how is it possible to rely on the surahs of disgraced prophets?
> We, like corpses dead a thousand years, will gather together; and then
> The sun shall judge the rottenness of our dead bodies.

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[8]For analysis of Farukhzad's other poems, see Hasan Javadi's "Women in Persian Literature: An Explanatory Study," in Women and the Family in Iran, ed. A. Fathi (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), pp.37-59.

Salaam, O innocent night
Salaam, O innocent night, you who change the eyes of the desert wolves into the bony pit of faith and trust
And on the side of your brook the spirit of willows smell the kind spirits of apes
I came from the indifferent world of thoughts, words and sounds,
And this world is like the nest of snakes,
And this world is full of the sound of the movement of people's feet that, just as they kiss you,
In their imagination weave your noose.

Look here
How the soul of the one who spoke with the word and played with the glance and found comfort with fondling; away from running on the imaginary scaffold, has been crucified.

Fortunate corpses
Dejected corpses
Quiet and reflective corpses
Well-countenanced, well-dressed, well-fed corpses
In the stations of certain times
And in the doubtful field of temporary lights
And the lust of buying the rotten fruits of vanity
Oh,
What people at the crossroad are looking for accidents
And the sound of the stop whistle
In the moment that a man must, must, must be smashed under the wheel of time
A man who is passing by the wet trees.[9]

The suppressed cries of Saniyyah Saleh's poem find a parallel in the stillness and imposed silence of Farukhzad's "A Cold Season." In the latter, however, alienation threatens to give way to a destructive rage, "a man must, must, must be smashed." Farukhzad did, in fact, envision the possibility of freeing the "cemented hands." Yet, as she

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[9]Translated by Bahram Jamalpur, quoted in J. Kritzeck's Modern Islamic Literature from 1800 to the Present, pp.188-9.

repeatedly pointed out in interviews,[10] her poetry was not concerned exclusively with the predicament of women but rather called for a change in attitudes which create and reinforce all manner of stereotypes.

One of the most interesting representations of the clash of perspectives between Eastern men and women is to be found in Hanan al-Shaykh's novel The Story of Zahra.[11] By presenting the same story from two different points of view, Zahra's and that of her husband, Hanan al-Shaykh brings to light the gulf which separates the two. In chapter four, "The Husband," we see the reasoning which renders Zahra a mere object; her flight from Lebanon to West Africa goes unnoticed by her own family and the suitors eager to find a wife:

> I married Zahra without knowing her. When I saw her and heard she was still a spinster, and that she was Hashem's niece, I thought: "Here is a ready-made bride waiting. By marrying her I'll be saved from having to go to Lebanon to look for a wife. I'll save the costs of travel and trousseau, for I've heard that brides here do not expect a trousseau as they do back home."[12]

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[10]Taped interviews distributed by the Ketab Corporation in Encino, California.

[11]The original text is in Arabic and was first published in Lebanon in 1980.

[12]Hanan al-Shaykh, The Story of Zahra, translated by Readers International (London: Readers International, 1986), p.61.

Absorbed in his own plans for the future, Zahra's husband is therefore oblivious to her already advanced neurosis. For her, what had been an attempt to escape becomes a second level of incarceration. By consenting to the marriage, she once again admits defeat in utter despair:

> Dear God! The things that I feel whenever Majed comes close to me! Cold winds, cold, crowding me close with thousands of snails crawling closer, crawling across the mud as the winds blow ever more strongly, carrying the snails' foul odour which soaks into every pore. I wanted to live for myself. I wanted my body to be mine alone. I wanted the place on which I stood and the air surrounding me to be mine and no one else's.[13]

What precipitates the breakdown of their marriage is not Zahra's suffering but rather the husband's shame; Zahra's "madness" becomes an embarrassment to him which allows him to discard her. This fate is repeated in her affair after her return to Lebanon. When she ceases to comply with her role as a sexual object, she is to be destroyed: "He's killed me. That's why he kept me there till darkness fell. Maybe he couldn't face pulling the trigger and dropping me to the ground in broad daylight."[14] Zahra's fate reflects that of many women in the East and when transplanted in the West it becomes even more problematic. The promise of freedom in the West, as in Zahra's flight from the homeland, is hardly ever fulfilled. Instead, it often becomes

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[13]Ibid., p.78.

[14]Ibid., p.183.

necessary for these women to cope with a new set of stereotypes.

In her memoirs,the Egyptian playwright and director, Laila Said, juxtaposes her life in Egypt with a period of her career in the United Sates. It is during her adolescence in Egypt that she realizes that the course of her life has been predetermined by traditions which give little credence to her own ambitions. A passage in which she recalls an engagement party organized by her own family and that of a suitor underlines the essence of her early experience in Egypt:

> The moment I took my place in the circle, I knew what was happening. Is this how they marry you off? I wondered. There was a soothing breeze which not even the circle which was tightening around me could dispel.
> I had heard about such events. At school, my girlfriends and I often asked ourselves what we would do when the day came and we were "displayed" how we would behave...But who was I being displayed for? Who was the man sitting in that affluent circle who would decide that afternoon whether he would have me for his wife?...Why was I sitting there, trapped like a helpless animal? Because my parents wanted it? Because the ancient laws of the land required it? Because I was a woman?[15]

Although she does not consent to the role allotted to her and finally breaks off her marriage, her compatriots' perception of her hardly changes; her efforts to revive a national theatrical tradition are ridiculed, at best dis-

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[15]Laila Said, A Bridge Through Time: A Memoir (New York: Summit, 1985), p.12.

missed as uninteresting: "He did not protest as I launched into my description, but it was clear from the expression on his face that he was humouring me. It was an expression I was to see on the faces of many men --right, left, or center-- when I talked about women's rights."[16]

In the course of her education in the United States, she comes across a double barrier. On the one hand, like other Egyptians, she finds Americans unsympathetic and uninterested in her concerns: "...we [a group of Egyptian students] couldn't find a single paper expressing the Arab viewpoint. We protested to the editors of this or that magazine in long letters, which we were too discouraged even to mail."[17] On the other hand, she finds herself stereotyped as an Oriental woman. Her encounter with two policemen who warn her to stay off the streets is a case in point. It is only a black maid who identifies with her dilemma and reminds her of the ways in which sexism and racism are manifestations of a similar state of mind:

> Grinning, with her gold teeth glinting, she said, "Oh, honey, those white folks are so scared of us. But you have nothin' to worry about..." she added with a gesture of her hand, as if to say, you are one of us. I smiled gratefully. "Do they put you down as Caucasian when they ask about your race?" I asked her naively. "No, hon," she replied, "just Negro."[18]

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[16]Ibid., p.159.

[17]Ibid., p.63.

[18]Ibid., p.21.

Laila Said's recollections, nevertheless, end on a positive note; having witnessed the plight of women in both her own culture and that of Western countries, she begins to see herself in a new light. The recognition that her own fate is inextricably bound to that of other women allows her to overcome cultural barriers and hope for a type of synthesis of East and West otherwise not easily achieved: "Maybe Third World women should not turn down the help they may get from Western women. Maybe we can help one another by holding hands across the barriers of men's ideologies, religions, and political systems in order to find solutions to our common struggles."[19]

No such resolutions are reached in Bharati Mukherjee's novel, Wife. The protagonist, Dimple Dasgupta Basu, is portrayed as a naïve Bengali teenager who has been raised to obey what is dictated by the tradition. This entails accepting a husband chosen for her by her elders and becoming a submissive wife. Her acquiescence to this role is symbolized in her name, Dimple.[20] After her marriage, she behaves in accordance with the same spirit; she accepts a new name chosen by her mother-in-law.

Only when her husband's plans for emigrating to the United States are postponed, does Dimple become assertive and urge him to act. She sees emigration to the West as a

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[19]Ibid., p.281.

[20]"A dimple is any slight surface depression." Bharati Mukherjee, Wife (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), epigraph.

means of escape from her lot in India. For her own part, Dimple tries to remove all obstacles to their departure. She puts an end to her pregnancy, because she perceives it as a hindrance to their move. Furthermore, subconsciously she is repulsed by bearing her husband's child: "She began to think of the baby as unfinished business. It cluttered up the preparation for going abroad. She did not want to carry any relics from her old life."[21] This first step towards determining her own fate sets the tone for the remainder of the novel. The gradual changes in Dimple's character coincide with her arrival in the West and become more problematic in the new setting.

Her friend's prophecy about her future in the West becomes reality, as Dimple finds herself imprisoned in an Indian immigrant colony in New York: "'you may think of it as immigration, my dear,...but what you are is a resident alien.'"[22] There are additional disappointments when she realizes that her idealized images of life in the West clash with the rather mundane details of reality; the sense of irony escapes her, and as a result she sees nothing but her failed quest for the exotic:

> She realized suddenly that she had expected apartments in America to resemble the sets in a Raj Kapoor movie: living rooms in which the guests could break into song and dance, winding carpeted staircases, sunken swimming pools, bil-

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[21]Ibid., p.42.

[22]Ibid., p.46.

> liard tables, roulette wheels, baby grand pianos, bars and velvet curtains.[23]

Her dreams shattered, Dimple becomes increasingly disenchanted with her husband. With longing, she looks back upon a sheltered and ordered life in India but recognizes that life also to be beyond her grasp. Questioning one culture on the premise of another, she loses her bearings in both:

> It had been better, she decided, on Dr. Sarat Banerjee Road where Amit had been the boss. There she had experienced him in terms of permissions and restraints. Here in New York, Amit seemed to have collapsed inwardly, to have grown frail and shabby. That was the problem: he was shabby compared to the nicely suited Jyoti Sen or the men pushing toothpaste and deodorant on television. She did not trust him anymore, did not trust his high-pitched yes and no which had once seemed oracular, did not trust his white cotton shirts with erect collars. She wanted Amit to be infallible, intractable, godlike, but with boyish charm.[24]

This admission of change in her perception marks the beginning of Dimple's "seduction" by the West. She finds herself more and more drawn towards the so-called westernized Indian women[25] who have rebelled against their tradi-

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[23]Ibid., p.64.

[24]Ibid., p.88.

[25]" Dimple could not take her eyes off Ina Mullick. She was wearing white pants and a printed shirt that ended in a large knot. There was an isosceles triangle of hard flesh between the shirt and the waistband of her pants, with a

tions. Her daily excursions in the city, her trying out of Western clothing, and finally her affair with Milt Glasser all symbolize her donning of a new identity. These changes, however, do not bring an end to her personal trials. Ina Mullick's admission to despair undermines her hope of finding an alternative: "'No one-- no Bengali, not my husband, not you, absolutely no one understands me. Do you know that last night I thought seriously of suicide? Now do you get it?'"[26] Consequently, she is ever more torn between the images of her past and present: "She felt it was not Dimple Basu who was singing and giggling with Milt Glasser."[27] Moreover, she realizes that in the eyes of this American lover, she will forever be an exotic Oriental woman.

The ending of the novel with its juxtaposition of an outburst of violence and the return, in Dimple's imagination, to the calm composure of an obedient wife sharply underlines the divisions within her personality. Reality and imagination become confused, as she can no longer distinguish between the fragments of her identity: "-but of course it was her imagination because she was not sure anymore what she had seen on TV and what she had seen in the private screen of three a.m...Women on television got away with murder."[28] Her hostility towards Amit is an expression of her

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dimpled navel in the center. Dimple had no idea that skinniness could look so chillingly sexy on some people." (p.74)

[26]Ibid., p.136.

[27]Ibid., p.194.

[28]Ibid., p.212.

frustration with constantly being perceived as a "subject." It is interesting to note, however, that the violence is primarily directed towards her husband, for he represents the world which originally forced her into submission.

Dimple Dasgupta's fate, at least partially, reflects Mukherjee's own cross-cultural dilemmas. As pointed out in the introduction to her latest collection of short stories, Mukherjee herself has suffered stereotyping. Discussing her immigration to the United States, she indicates:

> I had moved from being a "visible minority," against whom the nation had officially incited its less-visible citizens to react, to being just another immigrant. If I may put it in its harshest terms, it would be this: in Canada, I was frequently taken for a prostitute or shoplifter, frequently assumed to be a domestic, praised by astonished auditors that I didn't have a "sing-song" accent. The society itself, or important elements in that society, routinely made crippling assumptions about me, and about my "kind."[29]

Unlike the protagonist of her novel, Mukherjee has found the means to transcend the issues which trouble her existence in the West.[30] The answer for Mukherjee is in her creative works which have granted her a distance from an image of herself, initially influenced by what others saw in her. That self-consciousness has now been sublimated:

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[29]Bharati Mukherjee, Darkness (Markham, Ontario: Penguin, 1985), pp.2-3.

[30]It is difficult to believe that Canadians are more inclined to stereotyping than Americans. It would seem that Mukherjee's experiences in Canada and the United States belong to two different phases of her personal development.

> I have joined imaginative forces with an anonymous, driven, underclass of semi-assimilated Indians with sentimental attachments to a distant homeland but no real desire for permanent return. I see my "immigrant" story replicated in a dozen American cities, and instead of seeing my Indianness as a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration (or worse, a "visible" disfigurement to be hidden), I see it now as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated. I see myself as an American writer in the tradition of other American writers whose parents or grandparents had passed through Ellis Island. Indianness is now a metaphor, a particular way of partially comprehending the world.[31]

In its focus on the treatment of Eastern women Saliha Scheinhardt's Frauen, die sterben, ohne daß sie gelebt hätten has much in common with Mukherjee's Wife. The narrative is based on the true accounts[32] of a Turkish woman's experiences in Germany. The diary begins and ends in a German prison where the protagonist, Suna S., is serving a sentence for having murdered her husband. The first-person presentation of Scheinhardt's work renders the narrative much more confessional than Mukherjee's novel: "Dies ist kein Klagelied! Es ist auch nicht die Bedeutung eines schreck-

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[31]Ibid., p.3.

[32]All of Scheinhardt's narratives are well grounded in real events and factual representations. For this reason, some critics label her works mere "documents," but she has said in her own defence: "My first concern is with authenticity. That is why I do my research as if I were going to write a report, and I analyse my conversations in this way," quoted in "Books Reveal Tribulations of Turkish Women," The German Tribune 9 February 1986, p.11.

lichen Traumes! Dieses ist die Wirklichkeit, die Geschichte meines kurzen Lebens."[33]

Before her arrival in Germany, like Dimple Dasgupta, Suna is seduced by the idea of a distant and exotic land which promises to free her from the confines of life in an Anatolian village:

> Wir alle waren neugierig, wir wollten zu gerne mehr über Deutschland wissen. Wir fragten uns: Wo liegt dieses Land, das unsere Männer und Frauen in sich hineinsaugt...Ich glaube, zu der Zeit stellten sich Millionen Türken diese Frage. Auch ich! Inzwischen sind Jahre vergangen, ich habe es erfahren bis zum bittersten Ende. Nun weiß ich, wo Deutschland liegt, und wie es in Deutschland aussieht.[34]

Her image of Germany is determined first by the exile forced upon her by a husband who uses the foreign setting as a licence to mistreat and abuse her and secondly by the alienation she suffers in Germany. Incarcerated in an apartment, she has almost no means of interacting with Germans, hardly speaks the language, and can therefore have no access to the outside world. It is this helplessness which forces her to act alone and put an end to her suffering: "Nun beschloß die Angeklagte, die in ihrer Verzweiflung keinen anderen Ausweg sah, ihren Mann zu töten."[35]

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[33]Saliha Scheinhardt, Frauen, die sterben, ohne daß sie gelebt hätten, p.23.

[34]Ibid., p.37.

[35]From the court reports in the appendix, p.81.

Ironically, it is only in the course of her sentence that Suna develops contacts with Germans. This second experience of Germany mirrors the first one; the barriers of language and culture, at first separate her from others. Feeling rejected both by her Turkish relatives and the German inmates, she becomes insecure about her own identity: "Manchmal schäme ich mich, daß ich eine Türkin bin, ich möchte nicht ausgelegt werden. Darum schaue ich genau die deutschen Frauen an, ich lasse mir alles erklären, damit ich auch nichts falsch mache."[36] Then, as she gradually learns to communicate with German women, she wants to erase her past altogether:

> Ich wollte mich völlig ändern. Ich wollte die Vergangenheit abschütteln, innerlich und äußerlich. Ich fühlte mich außerdem nicht wohl in meinen alten Kleidern. Alles erinnerte mich an meine Vergangenheit. Natürlich haben meine Bekanntschaften mit deutschen Frauen sehr viel ausgemacht. Sie haben mir immer wieder eingeredet, meine Trauer zu ende zu bringen und zu lernen, auch im Gefängnis zu leben.[37]

Despite this new bond with German women, especially those who have suffered similar fates, she comes up against another level of rejection. When she appeals to immigration authorities to be granted permission to remain in Germany instead of being deported to Turkey where she faces revenge from her husband's family, she is turned down. She learns

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[36]Ibid., p.26.

[37]Ibid., p.57.

that society as a whole perceives her as a threat: "Warum kann ich nicht hier bleiben? Ich habe keinem Deutschen etwas angetan. 'Die Gesetze sagen es so,' sagte die Sozialberaterin, aber die Gesetze machen doch die Menschen, diese Menschen sollen kommen, sie sollen mich sehen und dann, dann werden sie ganz sicher ihre Gesetze ändern."[38]

The laws which prevent Suna S. from becoming integrated into German society are in essence the same as those that determined her fate in Turkey. In spite of the changes she has undergone, neither society is willing to allow her a new mode of life. Ultimately, the only place in which she feels secure is the prison-- a symbol for the manner of her existence both in Turkey and Germany.

The ending of Scheinhardt's narrative leaves the reader to speculate on the fate of the protagonist in the same way that Mukherjee's novel ends with ambiguity. This deliberate ambiguity is intended to reach beyond the texts and to reflect and question presuppositions on the part of all societies.

The permanent exile of Suna S., like that of Gülnaz K. in Saliha Scheinhardt's most recent publication Drei Zypressen, must be understood not as a product of a particular culture, but rather as a universal dilemma. The opening statement of this second work lays bare the tensions which continue to determine Oriental women's relationship to sources of power and authority:

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[38]Ibid., p.67.

> Ich liebe meinen Mann, ich liebe meinen Vater. Ich liebe meinen Mann wie meinen Vater. Ich verachte meinen Mann und kann es nicht sagen. Er ist ein Mann. Ich hasse meinen Vater und darf es nicht zeigen. Er ist ein Mann. Ich verabscheue den Meister und kann nicht weglaufen. Er ist ein Mann. Dennoch liebe ich meinen Mann, der mich mit der Kraft seines Körpers zu seiner Frau machte. Ich liebe meinen Vater; so muß es sein, sagte man mir. Oder fürchte ich sie alle?[39]

As pointed out in this statement, Oriental women are still reluctant to oppose openly their state of subjugation, be it in the East or in the West. In some instances, as in the case of Algerian or Iranian women who actively partook of a revolution and promise of change only to be bitterly disappointed, rebellion no longer provides an answer. As the Algerian feminist writer and film maker, Assia Djebar, points out there is indeed little evidence of change in such societies: "depuis quelques décennies-- au fur et à mesure que triomphe ça et là chaque nationalisme--, on peut se rendre compte qu'à l'intérieur de cet Orient livré à lui-même, l'image de la femme n'est pas perçue autrement par le père, par l'époux et, d'une façon plus trouble, par le frère et le fils."[40] Given their "double dilemma" however, Oriental women have taken steps to overcome the image carved for them by others. The Egyptian feminist Nawal el Saadawy,

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[39]Saliha Scheinhardt, Drei Zypressen (Berlin: EXpress, 1984), p.15.

[40]Quoted by Jean Déjeux in Assia Djebar: romancière algérienne, cinéaste arabe (Sherbrooke, Québec: Naaman, 1984), p.90.

for instance, has directed her challenges towards social institutions: "...the movement of liberation of women, or feminist activities, cannot achieve much by only showing interest in changing laws. They must parallel their struggle for changing laws with an even fiercer struggle to change social institutions through which it would be possible to apply these laws."[41] In fictional representations like Mukherjee's Wife and in true accounts such as Scheinhardt's Frauen, die sterben, ohne daß sie gelebt hätten counterarguments and change seem possible only through physical force. It is to be hoped that the reactions and the responses of Dimple Dasgupta and Suna S. do not become the norm and that other writers like Laila Said, Saliha Scheinhardt, and Bharati Mukherjee join their voice to the movement towards eliminating traditional stereotypes of the East, especially those of Oriental women.

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[41]Quoted by Mona Mikhail in Images of Arab Women: Fact and Fiction (Washington D.C.: Three Continents, 1979), p.43.

Chapter V

The Voice of the Cross-Cultural Writer

> What is to be done, O Moslems? for I do not recognise myself.
> I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Moslem.
> I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea;
> I am not of Nature's mint, nor of the circling heavens. [1]

Examples from travelogues, personal diaries, and fiction in chapters One, Three and Four have provided some insight into the types of dilemmas faced by Easterners in the West. Seeing themselves through the eyes of the West, Indian, Iranian, Egyptian, and Turkish travellers and immigrants have often perceived themselves as outsiders in Western societies. In the case of writers and artists residing in the West there is even a more acute sense of alienation, because they feel their shattered identity to be impinging

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[1]Reynold A. Nicholson, Ed. and trans., Selected Poems from the Divani Shamsi Tabriz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.125. The Persian text appears on p.124:

چه تدبیر ای مسلمانان که من خود را نمی دانم
نه ترسا نه یهودم نه گبرم و نه مسلمانم
نه شرقیم نه غربیم نه بحریم نه بریم
نه از کان طبیعتم نه از افلاک گردانم

upon their creativity. In such instances, the "creative voice" naturally reflects the fragmented identity of the artist. We have seen glimpses of this concern in the works of Driss Chraïbi, Balachandra Rajan, and Bharati Mukherjee. However, there are other works of fiction and autobiography whose primary focus is the problematic relationship between a writer's dual vision and his or her creation. In this genre, writing itself becomes a form of catharsis--an objectification and outward projection of inner dilemmas. Among many such examples, I have chosen four: Bharati Mukherjee's Days and Nights in Calcutta,[2] Salman Rushdie's Shame, Sadegh Hedayat's The Blind Owl, and Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North. With the exception of Mukherjee's work, all of the examples are works of fiction.

Mukherjee's Days and Nights in Calcutta is an autobiographical account of her return to her homeland after fourteen years of absence in North America. At first glance one becomes aware of the dualism posited in the title, "Days and Nights," which must be interpreted on many levels. First, it reflects the joint authorship of Mukherjee and Blaise and, therefore, the juxtaposed perspectives of the outsider (Blaise) and the insider (Mukherjee). On a more subtle level, however, the title reflects Mukherjee's own internalized double perspective; in her observations of India she is at once a native and an outsider.

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[2]This work is co-authored with Clark Blaise, but my analysis only concerns the second part written by Mukherjee.

During her years of absence she had realized that her marriage to a non-Hindu man and the pursuit of her career in North America had distanced her from her own traditions. Ironically, however, her visit to India further widens the gulf between her and the country she left behind. She is chastised for having abandoned her caste[3] and is regarded as an outsider.[4] Moreover, in India she is denied the identity she had shaped for herself in North America:

> Prior to this year-long stay in India, I had seen myself as others saw me in Montreal, a brown woman in a white society, different, perhaps even special, but definitely not a part of the majority...But in India I am not unique, not even extraordinary. During the year, I began to see how typical my life had actually been, and given the limited options of a woman from my class and from my city, how predictably I had acted in each crisis.[5]

On the one hand, she longs for a uniqueness, apparently only granted her in Canada. On the other hand, however, she wishes to be reintegrated into the society which reminds her of her past. This wavering between two positions is clearly reflected in Mukherjee's narrative. Throughout the text, in

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[3]"...the wife of the man who had invited himself to Montreal would caution me against touching any religious vessels since I was no longer 'full-Brahmin.'" (p.277)

[4]"To my relatives-- who accorded me the status of an honorary male by urging me to eat with Clark and the uncles at the first shift at the dining table, instead of on the floor on the second and third shifts with my aunts and girl cousins-- I was the embodiment of 'local-girl makes good.' And I was also an intimidating alien." (p.225)

[5]Bharati Mukherjee and Clark Blaise, Days and Nights in Calcutta (New York: Doubleday, 1977), p.179.

a manner reminiscent of Said's introductory passage in After the Last Sky, the narrative voice vacillates between addressing Indians as "us" and "them."

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the description of her encounters with Indian female friends. Despising these women's limited goals and their unflinching commitment to their husbands and children, she does not allow for any intimacy during her reunions with them. Treating "their" ambitions with bitter irony, Mukherjee comes perilously close to adopting Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's notion of an India badly lacking self-criticism. Mukherjee's manner of presentation would seem to suggest that she has undertaken a study of Indian "womanhood" rather than specific individuals:

> In Calcutta, being the wife of a socially and professionally prominent man was a full-time career. Being a woman physician not, for them, a preferred alternative. Their careers as housewives (chatelains is almost appropriate) demanded certain skills: managerial shrewdness, physical stamina, diplomacy. Dressing immaculately when they would rather lounge at home, making small talk with visiting dignitaries, taking the wife of a foreign consul to lunch at the Bengal Club, all this was part of their professional duty.[6]

Unlike Jhabvala, however, Mukherjee pierces through some of the barriers deliberately set up between herself and other Indian women. In spite of her assumption of superiority, Mukherjee cannot maintain complete distance from "them." Such uneasy reintegrations remain, nevertheless, transitory

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[6]Ibid., p.203.

and her visit to India ends without obvious resolutions. Yet, she seems to come closer to understanding her permanent expatriation:

> As I prepared to leave Bombay for the slow flight westward, I realized that for me there would be no more easy consolation through India. The India that I had carried as a talisman against icy Canada had not survived my accidental testings. I would return, of course, but in future visits India would become just another Asian country with too many agonies and too much passion, and I would be another knowledgeable but desolate tourist.[7]

The implications of this new attitude towards India are extremely interesting for Mukherjee's identity as a writer. Towards the end of her autobiographical narrative she reflects on the possibility of preserving aspects of Hindu culture in her own art. However, her ruminations on what constitutes an accurate representation of that literary and cultural heritage reveal another level of expatriation. In her description of Hindu aesthetics Mukherjee resorts to generalizations easily traceable to Western stereotypes:

> To admit to possessing a Hindu imagination is to admit that my concepts of what constitute a 'story' and of narrative structure are non-causal, non-Western. A Hindu writer who believes that God can be a jolly, potbellied creature with an elephant trunk, and who accepts the Hindu elastic time scheme and reincarnation, must necessarily conceive of heroes, of plot and pacing and even paragraphing in

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[7]Ibid., p.285.

> ways distinct from those of the average American.[8]

Almost unintentionally, Mukherjee re-asserts one of the many Western "myths of the Orient;" her claim that Oriental concepts of time and narrative have no rational or causal basis is not far from a similar assessment attributed to the fictional Persian narrator of Hajji Baba of Isphahan. Like Hajji Baba, Mukherjee appears to be saying "Indian, as I am, I have overcome the impossibility of writing like a westerner." At the same time, she consciously rejects the Western image of herself: "...I am not what I want my dust-jacket to suggest I am. Instead, I am...convinced that every aspect of the writing profession...weighs heavily against me because of my visibility as a stereotype."[9] In the end, however, her quest for an authentic voice leads her to a compliance with her Western audience: "Though in my fiction I may now be ready to construct new metaphorical Indians more real to me than the literary stereotypes, I must first persuade North American readers that the stereotypes are also-if only partially-- correct."[10] In her concluding pronouncements on the narrative voice best suited to her writing, Mukherjee overlooks her unresolved differences with the Hindu tradition and envisions a simple merging of Eastern thought and Western conventions:

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[8]Ibid., p.286.

[9]Ibid., p.285.

[10]Ibid., p.286.

> To me, the problem of voice is the most exciting one. Born in Calcutta and educated initially in Bengali, I now live in Canada and write in English about Indians living in India or in the United States. My aim, then, is to find a voice that will represent the life I know in a manner that is true to my own aesthetic. But my aesthetic has emerged during my education in North America. I am of the first generation of Indian writers to be influenced by American life and fiction...My aesthetic, then, must accommodate a decidedly Hindu imagination with an Americanized sense of the craft of fiction.[11]

The harmony which Mukherjee hopes to bring about in her art seems possible in an abstract form. Because of an obsession with seeing herself through the eyes of others,[12] in India and North America she adopts two different roles. Her only solace is, therefore, in the realm of the imagination where there are no observers: "I am content that my only stability is the portable world of my imagination."[13] For her audiences, however, she will always speak in an artificial voice.

The autobiographical narrative voice is also a focal point in Salman Rushdie's third novel, Shame. He opts for a narrator whose primary function is to comment upon the unreliability of the authorial perspective. At the same time, the narrative voice is intended to reflect the concerns of an author situated between two cultures. The precarious bal-

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[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p.225.

[13]Ibid., p.287.

ance between the subjective and the objective perspectives tends to undermine the authenticity of the authorial voice.

What intensifies the conflict between voices representing the author and the narrator is the concept of shame, integral to the plot of the novel:

> Somebody told me yesterday that Arthur Koestler said that the world is divided into two main controlling forces: in the West you have guilt, in the East you have shame, and that these were the things around which the world revolved. And I came to think about this, I've never read this in Koestler, but it seems that if he does say it, he's right. Because shame and its opposite, which is honour, seem to me to be kind of central to the society I was describing, to such an extent that it was impossible to explain the society except by looking at it through these concepts.[14]

On a superficial level, Rushdie sets up oppositions between Eastern and Western perceptions. But it is the internalization of these cultural differences which is reflected in the narrative and extends the concept of shame to the person of the author: "The novel interweaves its fantastic Pakistani narrative with an autobiographical account of the 'shame' of the writer-in-exile as he sets about making his novel."[15] Therefore, Rushdie's novel becomes a means for self-criticism, self-justification, and finally self-definition. His experiments with narrative voice mirror a need on his part to find his own voice.

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[14]Interview in Kunapipi 7:1 (1985), p.14.

[15]Michael Hollington, "Salman Rushdie's Shame," Meanjin 43 (1984), 406.

Shame begins in the third-person narrative voice, in what appears to be an objective and distanced tone: "In the remote border town of Q., which when seen from the air resembles nothing so much as an ill-proportioned dumb-bell, there once lived three lovely, and loving, sisters."[16] However, the smooth course of the narration is soon interrupted by an aggressive voice which reminds the readers that what they are reading is a construct of the narrator's imagination. Therefore, one level of narrative illusion is effectively destroyed and the narrator loses his transparence: "All this happened in the fourteenth century. I'm using the Hegiran calendar, naturally: don't imagine that stories of this type always take place longlong ago. Time cannot be homogenized as easily as milk, and in those parts, until quite recently, the thirteen-hundreds were still in full swing."[17] This second voice seems to represent the creator or the author.

In Chapter Two, the narration of the "story" itself is interrupted to insert information about the person of the author. The clear movement away from a simple mimetic representation which is inherent in this laying bare of the device of narration is balanced by an attempt to develop an intimacy between the reader and the author. Chapter Two presents us with a narrative voice which could be Rushdie's

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[16]Salman Rushdie, Shame (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), p.11.

[17]Ibid., p.13.

own. From this point in the narration the reader is confronted with two voices: one belonging to the omniscient and somewhat distanced narrator, and the other the voice of the intruding author. It should be noted, however, that there are instances in which the two voices merge. In other words, the narrative does not follow a strictly dialogical pattern, but rather demonstrates the breakdown of the voice of the omniscient narrator.

While expounding on the concept of shame as understood in the East, the narrator/author is drawn into explaining his personal sentiments on the subject. However, it is not shame on an historical level with which he has to struggle, but personal shame for being distanced from the culture he is describing:

> Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject...I know: nobody ever arrested me. Nor are they likely to. Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies? I reply with more questions: is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out territories?[18]

This passage is an attempt on the part of the author to justify the relevance of his presentation, as he does not feel himself to be fully a part of the culture he has undertaken to depict. Yet he is not in a position to detach himself

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[18]Ibid., p.28.

totally from it. The two intersecting voices could be seen as belonging to the narrator and his potential audience as well as representing the divisions within the authorial voice.

The next paragraph, in which the narrator/author confesses to being uncomfortably situated between two worlds, allows for a clearer demarcation between the two voices; on the one hand, there is the voice of the shame-ridden author and, on the other hand, that of the overseeing narrator: "I tell myself this will be a novel of leavetaking, my last words on the East from which, many years ago, I began to come loose. I do not always believe myself when I say this. It is part of the world to which, whether I like it or not, I am still joined, if only, by elastic bands."[19] In an interesting variation of the usual distancing of the narrative voice from the constructed world of the novel, Rushdie has presented his own authorial position as detached from the real world which is the subject of his mimetic efforts. At the same time, as we have seen, Rushdie has de-emphasized the illusion of the world of the novel while developing a confessional narrator who is more real than the world he describes.

A more primitive example of this narrative technique is to be found in Rushdie's first novel, Grimus. In this novel, the protagonist, Flapping Eagle, is an American Indian who suffers alienation from his native community. The extensive

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[19]Ibid.

use of intertextuality and word play in Grimus, however, obscures the true import of the device and reduces it to a pun on the word "Indian." Yet the same dilemma is reflected in the split personality of the narrator of Grimus: "I was the boy. I was Joe-Sue, Axona Indian, orphan, named ambiguously at birth because my sex was uncertain until some time later, virgin, young brother of a wild female animal called Bird-Dog...It was my (his) twenty-first birthday, too, and I was about to become Flapping Eagle. And cease to be a few other people."[20]

The narrative voice of Grimus undergoes a series of transformations in relation to the fictional world of the novel. This is quite unlike the disquieting effect of the author's appearance in Shame in which he confesses to an alienation from the subject material of his work. This does not mean, however, that in Shame the distance between the author and the narrator has totally disappeared. In fact, it is not possible to label Shame an autobiographical novel in the traditional sense of the term. The plot itself is not strictly autobiographical. Yet an "autobiographical pact," as defined by Philippe Lejeune, exists in the novel. More explicitly than in Midnight's Children (Rushdie's first novel), the reader is invited to equate the narrative "I" with Rushdie. This is a significant development in Rushdie's use of autobiography. He moves from implicit references to

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[20]Salman Rushdie, Grimus (1975 rpt.; London: Granada, 1982), p.15.

his own past in Midnight's Children to what could be called personal confessions in Shame. As Rushdie himself has pointed out, in his first novel he was not yet able to signal clearly the tensions between the narrator and the author:

> ...it's not surprising that people should assume that an autobiography is intended. However, I found, especially as he [the protagonist of Midnight's Children] grew older, that he and I diverged at many points strongly...I could not inform the reader that there are moments when the author and his narrator disagree. And I had to accept that that was, if you like, the price one had to pay for everything that he gave me.[21]

In Shame, however, Rushdie allows direct confrontation between the author and the narrator to take place in the course of the narration. As we have seen, the author does not permit the narrator to dictate the narrative; the narrator is interrupted, and the narration resumes only when the author has completed his own confession. This change in narrative style, the roots of which are present in Rushdie's two earlier works, is to be understood as a means of personal catharsis for the author. The novel, then, is for Rushdie the process through which he comes to recognize his personal shame.

While detaching himself from the fictional world which condones "shame," Rushdie is forced to admit that this concept is an integral part of his own nature. In Chapter Seven

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[21]Kunapipi, p.13.

while relating an incident in London in which a Pakistani woman is murdered by her father for having brought dishonour upon the family, Rushdie finds himself in sympathy with the father:

> The story appalled me when I heard it, appalled me in a fairly obvious way. I had recently become a father myself and was therefore newly capable of estimating how colossal a force would be required to make a man turn a knife against his own flesh and blood. But even more appalling was my realization that, like the interviewed friends etc., I, too, found myself understanding the killer. The news did not seem alien to me.[22]

It would seem that Rushdie's bonds with the East are not as tenuous as the readers are at first led to believe. In his interviews, as in his fiction, Rushdie places his Eastern literary heritage in the foreground of his discussions. With regard to his first novel, for instance, he points out:

> ...I think that when [Midnight's Children] is discussed in the West, it seems to get discussed almost entirely in terms of a certain string of writers who always get hung around its neck like a kind of garland, which is you know, García Márquez, Günter Grass, Rabelais, Laurence Sterne, Cervantes, Gogol, etc. So I thought that instead of talking about all that I'd try and talk about its Eastern literary ancestors and the sense in which it derives out of an Indian tradition which, to my mind, is much more important in it than this aforesaid list.[23]

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[22]Ibid., p.115.

[23]Interview, pp.6-7.

Despite the clarity of vision with which Rushdie proclaims his artistic aims, there are shades of uncertainty in the fictional voices which represent him. Like his protagonist, Omar Khayyam Shakil, Rushdie would seem to remain "a creature of the edge."[24] It is important to point out that Rushdie welcomes the lack of univocality in his fiction. In fact, the quarreling voices of Shame facilitate the juxtaposition of two cultural spheres; this is the type of co-existence to which the narrator of Shame aspires: "I, too, am a translated man. I have been borne across. It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion -- and use, in evidence, the success of Fitzgerald-Khayyam -- that something can also be gained."[25] As Jean-Pierre Durix has argued, the breakdown of Rushdie's narrative voices is a necessary step towards transformations and redefinitions of himself: "The translation of Rushdie may also be this uprooting from the East and this process of having to carry across material from another culture...Rushdie evokes the ambiguity which the Italian language shows so well, with its resemblance between traduttore, 'translator,' traditore, 'traitor.'"[26] For Rushdie, the internal divisions are indeed useful reminders of a complex and multifaceted personality.

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[24]Shame, p.21.

[25]Ibid., p.29.

[26]Jean-Pierre Durix, "The Artistic Journey in Salman Rushdie's Shame," World Literature Written in English 23 (1984), 459.

Unlike Rushdie, the Iranian writer Sadegh Hedayat seems to have been less successful in resolving the dilemmas which his cross-cultural experiences caused him to suffer. Western critics often cite Hedayat's upbringing and education in the French system as the source of the disenchantments that led to his suicide. For example, in a review of the French translation of Hedayat's novel, Gilbert Lazard postulates: "Fût-il un de ces Orientaux désaxés, captifs d'un Occident qui les laisse dans l'incertitude de leur destin?"[27] However, there is little evidence in Hedayat's biography to support Lazard's assumptions.

Although at an early age Hedayat developed an interest in French culture, when he had the opportunity to continue his studies in France he chose to return to Iran. His appreciation of French literature did not go beyond the writing of a few short stories in French; he was far more interested in experimenting with forms of Persian prose. Predictably, however, European critics give little credence to Hedayat's role in forging a new style of Persian prose. There is an obvious contrast between Lazard's analysis and the following statement by one of Hedayat's own contemporaries, Bozorg Alavi:

> Die größte Bedeutung Hedajats liegt, außer in der künstlerischen Form seiner Kurzgeschichten, in seiner Sprache. Sicher hat kein iranischer Schriftsteller auf die Entwicklung der persischen Schriftsprache

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[27]Gilbert Lazard, "Sadegh Hedayat et son chef-d'oeuvre," Le Figaro Littéraire, July 18 1953, p.2.

> in so kurzer Zeit einen so starken und vielseitigen Einfluß ausgeübt wie er.[28]

The source of Hedayat's malaise is not to be found in his interest in Europe but rather in his desire to free his own art, and by extension Persian art, from the type of dependency which he believed first the Arab invasion and later European imperialism had imposed upon it. In the introduction to his critical edition of The Rubayyiat of Omar Khayyam, Hedayat uses Khayyam's example to vent his disapproval of foreign influence in Persian art:

> Khayyam is the representative of the suffocated talent, tormented soul, the interpreter of the laments and the revolt of a great dignified, prosperous, and ancient Iran which little by little was being poisoned under the oppression of harsh Semitic thoughts and Arab domination.[29]

Veiled in these remarks is Hedayat's personal attack upon the contemporary monarch's (Reza Shah) naïve acceptance of Western norms. To counteract the effects of "Westomania," Hedayat advocated a return to Iran's own linguistic, cultural, and artistic heritage. In his texts, for instance, he insisted upon using Persian words where European equivalents had become customary.[30] The ultimate expression of He-

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[28]Bozorg Alavi, Geschichte und Entwicklung der modernen persischen Literatur (Berlin: Akademie, 1964), p.168.

[29]Quoted in Hassan Kamshad's Modern Persian Prose Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p.145.

[30]"...he would dig up words you couldn't find in dictionaries and then give them life! There were many such

dayat's preoccupation with the regeneration of Persian art is his only novel, The Blind Owl.

The narrator of The Blind Owl (he describes himself as a decorator of covers of pen-cases) claims to have suffered from a spiritual malady which has forever severed his ties with the outside world: "In the course of my life I have discovered that a fearful abyss lies between me and the other people and have realized that my best course is to remain silent and keep my thoughts to myself as long as I can."[31] However, the greatest threat posed to his already shattered personality issues from the depths of his subconscious: "My reflection had become stronger than my real self and I had become like an image in the mirror. I felt that I could not remain alone in the same room with my reflection. I was afraid that if I tried to run away he would come after

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words. I remember, for example, him pointing out that people were always using the English word "net," as in "net profit," instead of the Persian mok. Mok chand?" from Donné Raffat's interview with Bozorg Alavi in The Prison Papers of Bozorg Alavi: A Literary Odyssey (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), p.63.

[31]D. P. Costello, trans., The Blind Owl (New York: Grove, 1969), p.2. The text in the original, Buf-e Kur (Tehran: Javidan, 1972), will be provided in this and subsequent footnotes:

... حرفی بر سبیل زندگی باین مطلب برخوردم که چه ورطهٔ هولناکی میان من و دیگران وجود دارد و مصمم شدم که تا ممکن است باید خاموش بمانم، تا ممکن است باید انظار خودم را برای خودم نگهدارم. (۱۰)

me."[32] In this encounter with his Doppelgänger, the narrator's only source of solace is his art. Yet he fails to be inspired by what he considers to be the stultifying tradition of Persian art:

> I used to work through the day, decorating the covers of pen-cases. Or, rather, I spent on my trade of pen-case decorator the time that I did not devote to wine and opium. I had chosen this ludicrous trade of pen-case decorator only in order to stupefy myself, in order somehow or other to kill time.[33]

In his repeated attempts to emulate the work of his predecessors, he merely clings to the techniques used in their art.

Like the Persian mystics, he fixes his artistic goals upon one abstract and predictably elusive object, "the ethereal girl." Although at first she is a source of inspiration to him, his obsession with her eventually becomes an obstacle to his creativity. He projects the divisions within him-

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[32]Ibid., p.92. The original Persian places less emphasis on "reflection" than on seeing the face in the mirror.

قبل از اینکه بتوانم جدا آینه تصویر خودم نگاه کردم، دیدم صورتم شکسته تر و پیرتر شده بود. تعجبی نمود بعد که خودم را نمی شناختم. (۵۶)

[33]Ibid., p.5.

تمام روز مشغولیات من نقاشی روی جلد قلمدان بود - همه وقتم وقف نقاشی روی جلد قلمدان و استعمال مشروب و تریاک شده و شغل مضحک نقاشی روی جلد قلمدان اختیار کرده بودم برای اینکه خودم را گیج بکنم، برای اینکه وقت را بکشم. (۱۱)

self onto the character of his beloved. When the ethereal girl is first introduced, her eyes are described as "frightening, magic eyes" at once attracting and terrifying the narrator. In the scene describing her final surrender, however, the dualism of her character becomes an obvious threat: "Was it possible that this woman, this girl or this angel of hell (for I did not know by what name to call her), was it possible that she should possess this double nature? She was so peaceful, so unconstrained."[34] Ultimately the narrator's attempts to revive his art through her bring forth disappointment and frustration. As he begins to confuse imagination and reality, his muse becomes indistinguishable from his wife, whom he refers to as "the bitch." The woman he finally murders could be either "the ethereal girl" or his wife.

While witnessing the dismembered corpse in his room he has the momentary illusion of having broken out of the repetitive patterns of his art; the beloved who is traditionally only an object of admiration is here physically and metaphorically destroyed. Yet even this act of self-assertion soon dissolves into despair:

> Within me I felt a new singular form of life. My being was somehow connected with that of all creatures that existed about me, with all the shadows that quivered

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[34]Ibid., p.20.

آیا ممکن بود که این زن، این دختر، یا این موجودهٔ عذاب (چون نمی دانستم چه اسمی رویش بگذارم)
آیا ممکن بود که این زندگی دوگانه را داشته باشد؟ آفتاب بارام، آفتاب بی تکلف؟ (۲۰)

> around me...There was no conception, no notion which I felt to be foreign to me. I was capable of penetrating with ease the secrets of the painters of the past, the mysteries of abstruse philosophies, the ancient folly of ideas and species...it is at such times that the real artist is capable of producing a masterpiece. But I, listless and helpless as I was, I, the decorator of pen-case covers, what could I do?[35]

The narrator's inability to infuse life into his artistic heritage returns him once again to his threatening shadow, representing an empty shell of his "self." The attempts to make himself understood to his shadow result in a total negation of that self. In this sense, the narrator becomes "the blind owl," a mere reflection of others, forbidden both sight and insight in the symbolic darkness of his soul:

> My shadow had become more real than myself. The old odds-and-ends man, the butcher, nanny, the bitch and my wife, were shadows of me, shadows in the midst of which I was imprisoned. I had become

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[35]Ibid., pp.22-3.

در این لحظه افکارم مجمد شده بود، یک زندگی منجمد نیزد عجیب درون تولید میشد. چون زنده گیم مربوط سه دهه گذشته ام بود که مدام طوفانم میلرزیدند و وابستگی عمیق وجدانی ناپذیر با دنیا و حرکت سوجودات و طبیعت داشتم و بوسیله رشته های نامرئی جریان اضطراب بین من و همه عناصر طبیعت برقرار شده بود - هیچگونه نمود خیالی بتوانم عنید طبیعی نیز آمد - من قادر بودم بآسانی بر موزه نقاشی های قدیمی یا بسراغ کتابهای مشکل فلسفه، بمباحث ازلی اشکال و انواع بپردازم ... در این مواقع است که یکنفر هنرمند حقیقی می تواند از خودش شاهکاری بوجود بیاورد — ولی من که بیذوق و بیچاره بودم، یک نقاش روی جلد قلمدان چه می توانستم بکنم. (۲۲-۲۱)

> like a screech-owl, but my cries caught in my throat and I spat them out in the form of clots of blood...My shadow on the wall had become exactly like an owl and, leaning forward, read intently every word I wrote.[36]

Although the narrator's despair and eventual madness can be analyzed on a psychoanalytical level,[37] a thematic analysis reveals that a preoccupation with art forms is the primary motivation of Hedayat's novel. The narrator rejects traditional Persian art without turning to other sources of inspiration. The image of the owl evoked throughout the novel further reinforces the theme of the failed quest for new means of artistic expression; in the tradition of Persian mysticism, the owl is the only creature which refuses to embark on the search for the Divine.[38] The novel's ending

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[36]Ibid., p.123-24.

سایهٔ من خیلی پررنگ‌تر و دقیق‌تر از جسم حقیقی من به دیوار افتاده بود. سایه‌ام حقیقی‌تر از وجودم شده بود - گویا پیرمرد خنزرپنزری، مرد قصاب، نقوش و زن لکاته‌ام همه سایه‌های من بودند؛ سایه‌هائیکه من میان آنها محبوس بوده‌ام. در اینوقت شبیه یک جغد شده بودم، ولی بالهای من درگلویم گیر کرده بود. شکل لکه‌های خون آنها را تماشا می‌کردم. شبیه جغد هم عرضی دارد که مثل من فکر میکند. سایه‌ام به دیوار درست شبیه جغد شده بود و با حالت همنین نوشته‌های مرا به دقت میخواند. حتماً او هم مثل من مخفیانه، فقط او میتوانست بخواند. (۸۳)

[37]For further information see Carter Bryant's "Hedayat's Psychoanalysis of a Nation," in Hedayat's The Blind Owl: Forty Years After, ed. Michael C. Hillmann, Middle East Monographs, 4 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), pp.153-67.

[38]Mohammad R. Ghanoonparvar, "Buf-e Kur as a Title," in Hedayat's The Blind Owl: Forty Years After, p.69.

on a sinister note reflects Hedayat's own disgust with, on the one hand, the rigidity of traditional Persian literature which does not allow for innovation and, on the other hand, the mere mimicking of Western models. Whether Hedayat's suicide is to be seen as a direct consequence of this position will remain open to speculation. What is certain, however, is Hedayat's obsession with finding an appropriate voice from within which would have the strength to withstand cultural confrontations.

Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North actualizes the clash of cultures implicit in Hedayat's novel. The protagonist of Tayeb Salih's novel, Mustapha Sa'eed, suffers more intensely from cultural displacement. For him, there are no easy escapes from a double vision acquired through a long apprenticeship in colonial schools and in England. Although after his return to the Sudan Mustapha Sa'eed tries to become reintegrated in the life of his village, he fails to distance himself from his past in the West. His sudden disappearance from the village, after relating part of his life story to the narrator, is indicative of a failure to reconcile the divisions within his character.

The narrator's identification with Mustapha Sa'eed further enhances the impression of the split personality of the protagonist. In many respects, the narrator and Mustapha Sa'eed are indistinguishable from one another. Aside from similarities in their education in the West, their shared

vision allows them to be seen almost as one character. On the level of the narrative, Mustapha Sa'eed's own reminiscences are embedded in the frame story related by the narrator. In many instances the narrator's voice is replaced by Mustapha Sa'eed's. As a result, the narrator's first-person account and Mustapha Sa'eed's become interwoven. Moreover, in the course of the narration, the narrator even begins to merge with the protagonist:

> Was it likely that what happened to Mustapha Sa'eed could have happened to me? He had said that he was a lie, so was I also a lie? I am from here-- is not this reality enough? I too had lived with them. But I lived with them superficially, neither loving nor hating them.[39]

However, the two characters never completely merge. In fact, towards the end of the novel, the narrator perceives Mustapha Sa'eed as his rival. For instance, when he enters Sa'eed's study he is haunted by his image:

> I struck a match. The light exploded on my eyes and out of the darkness there emerged a frowning face with pursed lips that I knew but could not place. I moved towards it with hate in my heart. It was my adversary Mustapha Sa'eed. The face grew a neck, the neck two shoulders and a chest, then a trunk and two legs, and I found myself standing face to face with myself. This is not Mustapha Sa'eed-- it's a picture of me frowning at my face from a mirror.[40]

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[39]Tayeb Salih, Season of Migration to the North (Washington D.C.: Three Continents, 1985), reprint from 1969 Heinemann edition, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies, p.49.

[40]Ibid., p.135.

This passage, along with the juxtaposed voices of the narrator and Mustapha Sa'eed, would seem to allow a Freudian interpretation; many critics have explored the possibility of such readings.[41] However, to regard Mustapha Sa'eed merely as the narrator's subconscious would not give enough weight to the ending of the novel. Secondly, as Mohammad Shaheen has pointed out, there are unresolved ambiguities which undermine a simple equation of the two characters: "..we do not know whether the narrator is struggling for or against Mustapha Sa'eed."[42] Other differences are to be inferred from the narrator's depiction of Mustapha Sa'eed.

The image of the young Sa'eed which emerges from the fragments pasted together by the narrator is that of a man lured towards the West, with the hope of casting himself in a new mold: "The whole of the journey I savoured that feeling of being nowhere, alone, before and behind me either eternity or nothingness... Here, too, was a desert laid out in blue-green, calling me, calling me."[43] The deliberate distance with which Mustapha Sa'eed approaches the outside world allows him the freedom of the wanderer. At the same time, it deprives him of a sense of belonging. After his arrival in England, he shows clear signs of alienation. His

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[41]See Roger Allen's analysis and his references to other sources in The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982).

[42]Mohammad Shaheen, "Tayeb Salih and Conrad," in Comparative Literature Studies 22 (1985), 163.

[43]Tayeb Salih, p.27.

mastery of English, which had singled him out among his countrymen, proves to be inadequate: "My mind was like a keen knife. But the language is not my language; I had learnt to be eloquent in it through perseverance."[44] Moreover, he believes his initiation into Western culture to be tainted with artificiality: "From [Mrs. Robinson] I learnt to love Bach's music, Keats's poetry, and from her I heard for the first time of Mark Twain. And yet I enjoyed nothing."[45] To overcome his alienation, he willingly adopts the role of the outsider, confident of his ability to impose himself as an intruder. On the one hand, he sees himself through the eyes of the women who reduce him to stereotypes of "the African:" There came a moment when I felt I had been transformed in her eyes into a naked, primitive creature, a spear in one hand and arrows in the other, hunting elephants and lions in the jungles. This was fine."[46] On the other hand, he hopes to use this role-playing in order to subdue his lovers: "Yes, my dear sirs, I came as an intruder, into your very homes...I am no Othello. Othello was a lie."[47] Predictably, however, he himself becomes the victim of his mask. Having resolved to be the dominator, he becomes the dominated; when Jean Morris coerces him into carrying out

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[44]Ibid., p.29.

[45]Ibid., p.28.

[46]Ibid., p.38.

[47]Ibid., p.95.

her own suicide, Mustapha Sa'eed has lost control of his own fate:

> Slowly I raised the dagger and she followed the blade with her eyes; the pupils widened suddenly and her face shone with a fleeting light like a flash of lightning. She continued to look at the blade-edge with a mixture of astonishment, fear, and lust. Then she took hold of the dagger and kissed it fervently. Suddenly she closed her eyes and stretched out in the bed, raising her middle slightly, opening her thighs wider. "Please, my sweet," she said, moaning: "come-- I'm ready now." When I did not answer her appeal she gave a more agonizing moan. She waited. She wept. Her voice was so faint it could hardly be heard. "Please darling."[48]

This logic of the subjugation of the subjugator has been well elucidated by Malek Alloula in The Colonial Harem. In the preoccupation of the French photographer with erotic representations of Algerian women, Alloula sees a testimony of the photographer's and, by extension, the colonizer's "obsessive neurosis"[49] and ultimate impotence. He argues that the exaggerated and false portraits of Algerian women and society are replacements for what is denied to the gaze of the photographer. By the same token, Mustapha Sa'eed's adoption of the role of intruder and his murder of Jean Morris are expressions of his powerlessness vis-à-vis the West. His withdrawal to a secluded village is an extension of this defeat and a last effort to separate himself from

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[48]Ibid., p.164.

[49]Alloula, p.122.

that world which threw him into uncertainty about himself. This desire to disentangle the self and the other is reflected in his carefully hidden "English" library. The incongruous presence of this room in the midst of a desert hut shocks the narrator: "How ridiculous! A fireplace -- imagine it! A real English fireplace with all the bits and pieces...on either side of the fireplace were two victorian chairs covered in a figured silk material, while between them stood a round table with books and notebooks on it."[50] This room is also a symbol for the attraction which persists in the hidden recesses of Mustapha Sa'eed's mind. In a letter written shortly before his disappearance, he confesses to the narrator: "...mysterious things in my soul and in my blood impel me towards faraway parts that loom up before me and cannot be ignored."[51]

The dedication of his unfinished autobiography is another revealing testimony to Sa'eed's incurable duality of character: "To those who see with one eye, speak with one tongue and see things as either black or white, either Eastern or Western."[52] The blank pages of the autobiography are themselves startling confessions of a restless wanderer. In this sense, Mustapha Sa'eed's life is a never-ending "season of migration" to regions beyond his grasp.

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[50]Tayeb Salih, p.136.

[51]Ibid., p.67.

[52]Ibid., pp.150-51.

If the ending of the novel, with the narrator staying afloat "half-way between north and south,"[53] is an indication of the resolution of the dilemma of the divided self, then the narrator, unlike Mustapha Sa'eed, has adopted a position of mediation. It should be pointed out, however, that the same cathartic act of retelling and reconstructing did not release the protagonist from his inner turmoils. On a larger scale, the dilemma still persists. Tayeb Salih's own reflections on East-West encounters bring him closer to the position adopted by Sadegh Hedayat: "Tayeb Salih told Khaldoun al-Shama'ah, who interviewed him, that the interaction between the Arab Islamic world and Western European civilization is determined by illusions which exist on both sides."[54] In his fictional representation Tayeb Salih demonstrates a similar conviction; Mustapha Sa'eed is a victim not only of Western misperceptions but also of his own equally flawed perception of the West.

In the four texts we have examined, the issues which plague cross-cultural travellers from the East are presented as complex problems, with internal and external roots, not easily overcome through tidy poetic resolutions. It is, in fact, the very absence of smooth transitions from East to West which sparks the creation of such works and determines their tone. The voice which these writers find often reflects their personal tribulations. Yet this same

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[53]Ibid., p.167.

[54]Shaheen, 162.

discordant voice and its stubborn refusal to merge with that of the "other" allows the unique position of the Eastern writer to be heard.

Chapter VI

Writing in the Step-Mother Tongue

> Pour profaner le sanctuaire somptueux d'une langue, il faut y déposer une partie de soi--offrande mémorable et tatouée, ce livre! C'est pourquoi, je demeure ici entre les mains de la langue française. Langue que j'aime-- je le répète--comme une belle et maléfique étrangère.[1]

Most writers whose works have been examined thus far have overcome Mustapha Sa'eed's dilemma of the blank page in so far as they do not aspire to the model of "...those who see with one eye, speak with one tongue and see things either as eastern or western."[2] Yet even those Eastern writers who approach a second language with apparent ease, are given to reflection upon their choice of an alien language. They, too, are keenly aware of having adopted what Bharati Mukherjee has called, the "step-mother tongue."[3]

This term, as defined by Mukherjee, refers only to those who write in a second language without attempting to

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[1]Abdelkebir Khatibi, La Mémoire tatouée (Paris: Denoël, 1971), p.13.

[2]Tayeb Salih, pp.150-51.

[3]Bharati Mukherjee Blaise, "Mimicry and Reinvention," in The Proceedings of the Triennial Conference of CACLALS, Part Two, ed. Uma Parameswaran (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1983), p.147.

"mimic perfectly the colonial [language]."[4] This group of writers, Mukherjee argues, resists being subsumed in the literary traditions of a second language through subversion and reinvention. Set against this group, Mukherjee envisions another group of complacently "colonized" or "Orientalized" writers. In actuality, however, the delineations are not marked with the precision demanded by Mukherjee; the very act of mimicking suggests a degree of self-consciousness. Perhaps a clearer demarcation is to be made between those writers who articulate and display through their medium the fear of being mere "displacements in the discourse of the other,"[5] and others who believe they are able to impose themselves upon a second language by blending in. In either case the balance between the self and the other is extremely precarious. When the rights of the mother tongue of an author are usurped, writing itself becomes an act of compromise between two contending cultural spheres. Ultimately one can only speak of degrees of compromise.

One situation in which an author is made more acutely aware of his or her choice of the medium of expression is that of exile. For some, the barrier between a native language and that of their adopted homeland proves to be insurmountable; in such instances, the questions of identity and language are inextricably linked. In the following state-

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[4]Ibid.

[5]<u>After the Last Sky</u>, p.140.

ment, for example, the Iranian writer Mahshid Amir-Shahy sees her exile in Paris as an impediment to her creativity:

> I long to speak our mother tongue, whose alleyways and twistings are my second nature, whose delicacies I feel, in whose thoughts I appreciate the characteristic gleam. It's a language whose words I can piece together and set in place like jewels in their setting. I can mold its pliant syllables like wax and give it new possibilities; I can use it to bargain in the marketplace, to bicker with my sister, to give my daughter lessons and to write my stories. Now and again, after an interval of days, or of hours, I hear once more behind the door of some avenue in Paris the warmth of the Persian tongue...and moment by moment the sorrow of exile approaches the limits of madness.[6]

Shortly after the publication of this statement, Amir-Shahy returned to Iran in an obvious attempt to become reintegrated in her own linguistic and cultural milieu. Her flight from exile stands as proof that repatriation through language is not always possible or desirable. On yet another level, Amir-Shahy's return to Iran implies that she perceived her efforts to preserve Persian language and literature in exile as futile; in Paris she would always risk being isolated from the currents of her own literature.

The same concerns which brought about Amir-Shahy's journey homeward are explored in Naïm Kattan's short story, "Le Gardien de l'alphabet." Ali Souleyman's conviction that the sacred Koranic alphabet of the Turkish language must not

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[6]Quoted by Michael Beard and Hasan Javady in their article in World Literature Today (258) from Qiyam-e Iran.

be replaced by a Latin script makes him an outcast in his own society. This alienation becomes even more pronounced in Arab countries where his accent in Arabic receives more attention than his ambitious project. This sense of exile becomes fixed with his decision to settle down in a seemingly remote city in Canada: "C'est au cours de cette longue conversation que le pope lui parla d'une ville lointaine, perdue dans les neiges de l'Amérique et où les fidèles avaient construit une mosquée: Edmonton."[7]

In Edmonton, once again, Ali finds his compatriots and co-religionists uninterested in re-instating the old alphabet. Faced with this final rejection, he embarks on the gargantuan task of rewriting Turkish texts in Arabic script. However, the preservation of the texts soon becomes an end in itself: "Ali lisait rarement les ouvrages qu'il conservait."[8] Ironically, while he obsessively copies texts, he becomes increasingly less interested in the larger dynamic cultural sphere from which they emerge. His aims become so obscured that he neglects to teach Turkish to his own children, although he had originally intended to preserve the old alphabet for the younger generation of Turks.

Even when the validity of his ambitions is questioned by the visiting Turkish philologue, Behjet Hamid, whom he has long admired, Ali prefers to turn a blind eye to the

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[7]Naïm Kattan, "Le Gardien de l'alphabet," in La Traversée (Montreal: Hurtubise, 1976), p.112.

[8]Ibid., p.117.

fact that he has deliberately placed himself in a cultural vacuum: "Mais c'est un fait, mon cher ami, c'est de l'histoire. Nous vivons le présent."[9] For Ali it is the role rather than the task which has gained significance. Therefore, he shows no interest in his daughter's eagerness to join him in his efforts. He had hoped to pass on the role of "gardien de l'alphabet" to one of his sons: "Dommage qu'Amina soit une fille."[10] This very conclusion suggests that, during the long period of collecting, cataloguing, and copying texts Ali has gradually, and perhaps subconsciously, realized that his language cannot be safeguarded against change. His lack of interest in the substance of his library would seem to be a direct consequence of his tacit understanding that the essence of all language is persistently elusive.

In his position as a multicultural writer, Naïm Kattan has himself been confronted with problematic juxtapositions of languages. He maintains an attachment to Arabic, which he regards as his mother tongue, and believes that in his writing there are remnants of what he himself labels "le discours arabe." Yet in his description of what constitutes the essence of Arabic writing he fails to render this essence in concrete terms: "Dans le discours arabe, il y a beaucoup de mots, les gens parlent beaucoup mais l'essentiel est très

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[9]Ibid., p.124.

[10]Ibid., p.125.

peu dit. Mais il est exprimé quand même."[11] Furthermore, he confesses that French has obscured some of the ways in which Arabic used to influence his writing. In an interesting example Kattan describes his difficulty in recognizing his own work in an Arabic translation:

> Il y a deux ans, il y a un Musulman, en Israël, qui a lu Adieu Babylone et a décidé d'en traduire un chapitre en arabe. Il l'a fait et me l'a envoyé après. Et j'ai lu Adieu Babylone qui se passe dans un pays arabe traduit en arabe. Ç'a [sic] été une expérience dure et très étrange. Dure tout de même parce que je ne m'y suis pas reconnu, écrit dans ma langue maternelle. Je lisais ce chapitre que j'ai écrit moi-même et je ne me reconnaissai pas. Je me suis donc dit: Mon Adieu n'est pas simplement la fin d'une histoire mais aussi le début d'une autre vie.[12]

The new beginning to which Kattan refers has not consisted of a simple integration into French language and culture. In this realm, also, Kattan has cautiously opted for distance. Instead of living in France, he has chosen Quebec with the express intention of being "vraiment dans un rapport d'échange (critique) avec la mère-culture française."[13]

For his part, Kattan appears to be content with the subtle presence of his multi-layered linguistic and literary heritage in his writing. His many cross-cultural encounters have taught him that more than one language or literary tra-

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[11]Interview with J. Allard, p.15.

[12]Ibid., p.16.

[13]Allard, p.9.

dition will shape his texts. Kattan's acceptance of the continuous confrontation of languages in fact enables him to be at once within and outside any linguistic system. Like Abdelkebir Khatibi, Kattan does not envision undisturbed juxtapositions of languages.

In his study of bilingual writing in North African literature and his autobiographical works, La Mémoire tatouée, Khatibi describes the bilingual writer's relationship to a second language in terms of a constant dualism of love and hate. His pronouncements on Maghrebian writing in French can be extended to other categories of multi-lingual or multi-cultural literature:

> La langue étrangère, dès qu'elle est intériorisée comme écriture effective, comme parole en acte, transforme la langue première, elle la structure et la déporte vers l'intraduisible. J'avancerai ceci: la langue dite étrangère ne vient pas s'ajouter à l'autre, ni opérer avec elle une pure juxtaposition: chacune fait signe à l'autre, l'appelle à se maintenir comme dehors. Dehors contre dehors, cette étrangeté: ce que désire une langue... c'est d'être singulière, irréductible, rigoureusement autre.[14]

Like Kattan, Khatibi foresees the mutual interferences of two languages as a positive step towards a synthesis-- "un récit qui parle en langues." That is to say, a literature which transcends the limits of specific languages and which does not resist translation.

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[14]Maghreb pluriel, p.186.

In practice, bilingual and polyglot writers have experienced more the tensions described by Khatibi and less the linguistic reconciliation. For instance, the Turkish writer, Saliha Scheinhardt, whose works in German address the problems of Turkish immigrants in Germany, sees herself at once lured to and repelled by a language which remains stubbornly alien:

> Ich schreibe in Deutsch. Es ist ungemein schwer --so reizvoll es auch ist, in einer Fremdsprache zu experimentieren-- das Leben eines bestimmten Kulturkreises und Sprachraumes in einer anderen Sprache in literarischer Form wiederzugeben. Hinzu kommt, daß Deutsch immer noch eine Fremdsprache für mich ist.[15]

The medium chosen by Scheinhardt is particularly suitable to the thematic focus of her works, namely the voluntary exile of her compatriots: "Dieses Buch kann nur ein bescheidener Beitrag sein. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis, warum Menschen ihre Heimat verlassen müssen, wie sie das Leben im selbstgewählten Exil meistern."[16] Writing in a second language might distance her from the subject of her studies. Yet this same technique threatens to implicate her in the fate of the characters of her works.[17]

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[15]Saliha Scheinhardt, from the introduction to Und die Frauen weinten Blut (Berlin: EXpress, 1980), p.9.

[16]Ibid., p.8.

[17]In an article in the February 9 1986 issue (p.11) of The German Tribune Scheinhardt is quoted as having said that she perceives of certain similarities between herself and the characters of her stories.

The same path has been trodden by authors who, because of a colonial experience, have had a second language imposed on them. Numerous Indo-Anglian and African writers have had to tackle the rather thorny issue of the bridge between language and identity. As demonstrated in the example of the Tamil poet R. Parthasarathy, bilingual writers rarely attain a state of perfect linguistic harmony:

> My situation in the context of Indian verse in English can be described as fluid. Today, I find myself in a situation of bilingualism, of being at home in two languages, English and Tamil. And this bilingualism has set up a painful, but nevertheless fruitful, tension with regard to poetry.[18]

Other writers from former British or French colonies, in Bharati Mukherjee's classification the "reinventors," insist upon conveying the spirit of their own language and culture through the medium of a Western language. It is to this end that writers like the Nigerian Gabriel Okara have submitted the English language to drastic transformations. In his novel, The Voice, for example, Okara juxtaposes elements of Ijaw and English idiom. He argues that linguistic interpenetrations of this nature are crucial to a uniquely African representation in art:

> As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the

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[18]R. Parthasarathy, "Whoring after English Gods," in Writers in East-West Encounter: New Cultural Bearings, ed. Guy Amirthanayagam (London: Macmillan, 1982), p.71.

> fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as his medium of expression.[19]

As argued by Mukherjee, the changes imposed on European languages can prove to be the non-native writers' only means of self-assertion. By distorting the language of "the other," bilingual writers can awaken their readers to the importance of another culture hidden behind a Western mode of expression. However, to return to Khatibi's remarks in La Mémoire tatouée, there is always the danger of losing too much of oneself in the process of manipulating the discourse of the other.

I have selected three examples from Eastern fiction in English in order to demonstrate the degrees of experimentation with language. The first two novels are by Iranian writers in exile, Taghi Modarressi's The Book of Absent People and Manny Shirazi's Javady Alley;the third example is Salman Rushdie's novel Grimus. In the opening statement of her introduction to Javady Alley, Manny Shirazi writes: "I would have liked to have written my first book in Farsi, but as I was unable to I wrote it in English."[20] Without further elucidating the reasons which compel her to write in English, Shirazi goes on to confess, with an obvious

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[19]Gabriel Okara, "African Speech...English Words," Transition 10 (1963), p.15.

[20]Manny Shirazi, Javady Alley (London: Women's Press, 1984).

bitterness, that the completion of the book was contingent upon her learning "Queen's English." It would seem that, for Shirazi, writing in English is equated with a full-fledged linguistic and cultural deracination. At least in the introduction, she demonstrates a reluctance to disturb the "correctness" of English. To be understood by British and North American audiences, Shirazi seems to be saying, she must learn to speak "their" language.

This conviction is manifest in her painstaking attempts to render into English the cultural setting of the novel. To bridge the gap between herself and her readers, Shirazi provides a glossary of Persian words, accompanied by a list of relevant historical events. However, now and then she abandons her zeal for translation and introduces untranslated and untranslatable text. In one instance, a children's game, alac do lac, is only transliterated;[21] no further explanation is provided in the glossary or in the context. One wonders if while writing of childhood reminiscences, Shirazi has set aside her linguistic self-consciousness. In contrast to this example, many passages of the novel appear to have been treated by a meticulous translator:

> I ate the bread and the cheese and sweet tea; it wasn't really so bad. Granny always said, "cheese is good for you." But I would have liked it if we had had chips, preferably with eggs and tomatoes.[22]

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[21]Ibid., p.91.

[22]Ibid., p.19.

Although the word "chips" is a literal and correct translation from Persian into British English, it fails to bring about the desired effect; the English reader will be puzzled by the description of the meal, while the Iranian reader will recognize a discordant note. Despite the attempt to channel the Persian character and setting of her novel into patterns of English, Shirazi is unable to produce a complete cultural transplant. Even when she is successful in finding the English equivalent, she is clearly uneasy with her choice. Repeatedly, she comes up against a linguistic layer which resists easy renditions in the idiom of the other. Hence, the occasional lines of Persian scattered throughout the text which are in apparent contradiction with the goal of translating the entirety of her text into "Queen's English." These textual incongruities, however, would seem to stand out as involuntary acts of self-defiance.

Manny Shirazi's use of English is an example of cautious initiation into a new language. Her work mirrors the hesitations and tensions inherent in any crossing of cultural boundaries; her self-consciousness indicates that although she is aware of being an outsider in the framework of the English language, she has not yet become confident in her "subversion" of that language. Therefore, she wavers between a desire to be understood by a broader audience and the need to speak in her own voice.

In The Book of the Absent People, Taghi Modarressi is more eager to bring to his writing aspects of his own language. In fact, he deliberately juxtaposes English and Persian. As a result, the novel, his first in English, becomes an experiment in bilingual writing. Hence, one reviewer's comments: "These visions are prose poems. Modarressi writes like a poet in translation, with idiomatic grace and yet with a hint of grief about what is being lost or only stabbed at because the language is not Persian or at least Arabic."[23] Unlike Shirazi, Modarressi does not introduce Persian script in his text. Instead, like Okara, he uses direct translation: "...initially I did not write to publish in English...when I translated the novel from Farsi to English, I tried to do it in a concrete transliteral fashion. It would have been impossible to transplant the atmosphere of the novel into an English language form."[24]

Although thematically Modarressi's work remains within the limits of the genre of the novel of social concern (the story revolves around mysterious disappearances of characters, political imprisonments, and street riots), in its linguistic expression it resists all conventions. If the prefatory reference to Attar's The Conference of the Birds is intended to sum up the poetic essence of the novel, The

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[23]Christina Robb's review in The Boston Globe March 7 1986, p.12.

[24]From my own interview with Modarressi, August 4 1987.

Book of Absent People must be interpreted as an invitation to a linguistic odyssey:

> Oh, may your journey to the border of Sheba be happy.
> May your speaking the language of the birds with Solomon be happy.
> Hold back the demon in chains and in prison
> So you will be the keeper of the secret like Solomon.[25]

The narrator of Modarressi's novel may not speak "the language of the birds," but he is successful in constantly thwarting the reader's linguistic Erwartungshorizont.[26] With ease, he moves from English to direct translations of Persian sayings, while no explanations or glossary definitions are provided to supplement the purely contextual knowledge of the audience. For example when we read, "You have to find your brother Zia among your own relatives, not among strangers. You must know your own family first, and then start attacking this one and that one's leg,"[27] the significance of the speech is not obscured; it is understood that "attacking other people's legs" means making demands of others. Yet the sense of local colour reinforced by the narrator's idiolect postpones the uninitiated reader's identification with the world of the fiction. Because the reader is required to sift through the cryptic language of the text,

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[25]Taghi Modarressi, The Book of Absent People (New York: 1986). [my emphasis]

[26]Hans Robert Jauß's "Literaturgeschichte als Provokation," in Rezeptionsästhetik, Theorie und Praxis (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1975).

[27]Modarressi, p.56.

the act of reading becomes a rite of passage into a new mode of speech-- to coin a new phrase in the spirit of the novel, "Farso-Anglian."

An interesting counter-example to Modarressi's use of Persian expressions is that of Roy Mottahedeh in his semi-fictional The Mantle of the Prophet. To endow the narration of the life of Ali Hashemi with authenticity, Mottahedeh frequently introduces translations from Persian: "Eventually the crowd became so thick that, as one says in Persian, 'a dog wouldn't recognize its master.'"[28] The interjection, "as one says in Persian," is intended to redirect the reader's attention to the focus of the argument. Always careful to avoid a mental digression on the part of the reader, Mottahedeh provides the English equivalent of Persian idioms: "Parviz said, 'we're lending each other bread' (which is the Persian equivalent of 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours')."[29]

In contrast to Mottahedeh, Modarressi breaks down the mediative barrier between the two languages and directly presents "what one says in Persian" even when there is risk of incomprehension:

> Even now, after some thirty-odd years, they still talked about it as though it had happened yesterday. They had never given any thought to the children of

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[28]Roy Mottahedeh, The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p.16.

[29]Ibid., p.47.

> Homayundokht, God forgive her soul, and used to melodramatically describe the onion and the garlic of that story in front of my Khan Brother Zia and my sister Iran as though those two were deaf and couldn't hear them.[30]

The general sense of the expression, "the onion and garlic of the story," can be surmised from the context; what is implied is an unnecessarily detailed account of the character Homayundokht's death. Although the bilingual reader is more actively drawn into the description, he, too, will require some effort to switch from one linguistic/cultural sphere to another; the message appearing in the guise of English must still be decoded. While one group of readers might be baffled, another group must carry out simultaneous translations.

In other passages, a broader familiarity with Persian language and culture is taken for granted:

> Then I set off again in a hurry. From a hundred paces away, I heard his whistling begin once again. He was whistling the Chekavak Corner of the Scale of Homayun. When he reached the Bee-Dad Corner, he started twittering like a nightingale-- a constant massaging twitter that polished the wet street.[31]

In this context, transliteration rather than translation is the only bridge between the narrative voice and the reader. The audience unfamiliar with Iranian music will only grasp a

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[30]Modarressi, p.15. [My emphasis]

[31]Ibid., p.13.

fleeting reference to music but will not be aware of the pun made on the name of Homayundokht and the musical scale called Homayun. Similarly, the feast of "the killing of Omar," a Shi'ite annual ritual in which effigies of the second Chaliph are burned in a demonstration of hatred, is not elucidated:

> Early in the morning they went to the bathhouse together, and with henna they drew flowers and leaves on their foreheads and the backs of their hands. Early in the evening they dressed in their flashy red dresses. They sat in front of a mirror and, old as they were, they applied their make-up with seven brushes. As the guests arrived, the sisters poured pumpkin seeds and cantaloupe seeds into a pan and insisted that everyone put on a toothy grin so the seeds would burst open and smile like Damghan pistachios. Two hours into the evening, they set fire to the effigy of Omar, made of tissue paper and wearing a red costume, and they cried together with joy.[32]

The scene could be read as another example of local colour. In this type of reading, perhaps the associations with Homayundokht's suicide in flames will be discerned. However, the more significant relationship between a religious ritual celebrated in a domestic setting and the violence projected onto the streets of Tehran may be obscured. Underlying this description is the destructive force which later in the narrative takes hold of the entire country.

Another level of difficulty is posed by dialogues which amount to little more than direct rendering of speech from

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[32]Ibid., p.185.

Persian. The following exchange between Rokni and his mother borders on the absurd, while the phrases are intended to convey the anguish and the frustration of both characters after the death of the patriarch of the family:

> "I want to open the doors of Homayun-dokht's room."
>
> "Rokni-jun, I beg of you, hold back and wait so we can think this through and learn what sort of dust we have to pour on our own heads. The sealed door is not easy to open."
>
> "I'll show you how easy it is." But when I examined the lock, I saw that to undo it was the work of an elephant.[33]

The repeated use of unfamiliar words and phrases still allows the reader a partial understanding. Yet it is clear that linguistic nuances will remain beyond some readers' grasp. What Modarressi's narrative devices emphasize is the impossibility of bridging a cultural gap through language alone: "As far as the relationship between English and Farsi is concerned, I believe the dissimilarities override the similarities."[34] The underlying argument would seem to be that no glossary or network of authorial interjections can eliminate all possible readers' "spots of indeterminacy,"[35]

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[33]Ibid., p.165.

[34]From my interview with Modarressi.

[35]The term is derived from Roman Ingarden's The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature, trans. George G. Grabowicz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

especially in a work of bicultural or multicultural nature. In fact, as Reed Dasenbrock has argued, deliberate disorientation is often the essence of writing in a second language:

> Indeed, the meaningfulness of multicultural works is in large measure a function of their unintelligibility for part of their audience. Multicultural literature offers us above all an experience of multiculturalism, in which not everything is likely to be wholly understood by every reader. The texts often only mirror the misunderstandings and failures of unintelligibility in the multicultural situations they depict.[36]

Seen in this light, Modarressi's eccentric use of English serves to signal to his readers cultural norms beyond their grasp. He equates the act of reading with a symbolic quest into the realm of the unknown; in the reference to Attar's poem the reader is invited to "speak the language of the birds." But this journey to a new linguistic realm is, like the quest in The Conference of the Birds, never-ending. There exists an interesting analogy between the aimless wanderings of the protagonist, especially in the final scene of the novel, and the reader's sometimes unfruitful linguistic quest. At the end of the novel, like Rokni, the reader might shrug his shoulders in apparent incomprehension:

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[36]"Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English," PMLA 102 (1987), 12.

> Who knows? Maybe already they're wondering how I am and where I've gone. Am I alive, am I dead, what if I've been done away with, what if I, too, have joined the world of absent people? But now I think of other things. I loiter in the streets and stand in a line at the movie houses. If they stopped me and asked, "Rokni, what for?" I would shrug my shoulders.[37]

The note of indeterminacy on which the novel ends extends beyond the uncertainties of the fate of the protagonist/narrator; on another level, it reflects the author's first hesitant steps towards new creative acts and his concern with the reception of his novel in an English-speaking milieu. Yet this venture into the realm of multicultural writing indicates Modarressi's break from those writers in exile who continue to seek their audience in their native lands. In sharp contrast to Amir-Shahy, Modarressi has chosen immigration rather than exile and, as an immigrant writer, has launched on a path towards new means of expression.

Salman Rushdie's Grimus is another example of experimental use of language. First published in 1975, the novel was at first favourably received only by science fiction readers and eventually became classified as a work of science fiction-- this in spite of Rushdie's disagreement with the classification of his work: "I personally think it doesn't fit into any category...I don't think it's science fiction, anyway, because there's no science in it. It's a

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[37]Ibid., p.206.

fantasy novel, really."[38] The debate concerning the genre of Grimus has not yet been settled;[39] the only point upon which Rushdie's critics agree is that both in form and composition Grimus is a hybrid. In it Rushdie brings together elements of Eastern and Western literatures and languages to create a literary puzzle.

The title itself initiates the game; it is an anagram of the name of the ancient Iranian mythical bird, Simurg. The reworking of myths and legends also extends to the plot of the novel which reads like a reversal of the storyline of a twelfth-century Persian allegorical poem, Farid ud-Din Attar's The Conference of the Birds-- itself a rewriting of the myth of Simurg. As Rushdie's novel is largely based on Attar's poem, it may be useful to provide a brief summary of The Conference of the Birds.

In his allegorical poem, Attar makes a pun on the name of the mythical bird Simurg: all birds of the universe set out on a quest for the essence of the Divine, which their guide reveals to be the bird Simurg living on the mountain of Kâf. Although the journey to the mountain is hazardous, a group of birds finally embarks on the search. At the end of their journey, when the thirty remaining birds reach their goal, they discover that through their quest for the Divine

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[38]Interview, Contemporary Authors, 111 (1984), 415.

[39]For further discussion see Uma Parameswaran's "Handcuffed to History: Salman Rushdie's Art," Ariel 14 (1983), 34-45 and Ib Johansen's "The Flight from the Enchanter: Reflections on Salman Rushdie's Grimus," Kunapipi 7 (1985), 20-32.

they themselves have become Simurg or incarnations of the Divine; in Persian si murg literally means thirty birds:

> There in the Simorgh's radiant face they saw
> Themselves, the Simorgh of the world--with awe
> They gazed, and dared at last to comprehend
> They were the Simorgh and the journey's end.
> They see the Simorgh--at themselves they stare,
> And see a second Simorgh standing there
> They look at both and see the two are one.[40]

Rushdie signals his own re-arrangement of this myth by using the name Simurg in the anagram of the title. Moreover, in the spirit of Attar's poem he leads his readers through a maze of details which make up the plot of the novel.

Before the beginning of the novel there are four quotations: the first is from T.S. Eliot's The Four Quartets, the second from Fitzgerald's translation of Attar's Conference of the Birds, the third from Ted Hughes; the fourth taken from I.Q. Gribb's "All-purpose Quotable Philosophy," is fictitious and belongs to the world of the novel itself. By juxtaposing allusions to both well-known literary texts and fictitious ones, Rushdie expects his readers to adopt an active role in deciphering what he presents in the guise of literary puzzles. Secondly, by quoting Fitzgerald, a literary figure with a reputation for altering original texts in his translations, Rushdie draws attention to the type of textual tampering which he himself is about to undertake in Grimus.

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[40]Farid ud-din Attar, The Conference of the Birds, trans. Afkham Darbandi, Dick Davis (Middlesex: Penguin, 1984), p.219.

The second piece of the puzzle of "Grimus" is found in a rather cryptic passage in Chapter Ten which also foreshadows the outcome of the plot:

> The bird-kingdom is remarkably suitable for mythmakers...Consider too, the profusion of bird-Gods in Antiquity. The Phoenix. The Roc. The Homa...The Orosch. The Saëna. The Anqa. And of course, the master of them all, Simurg himself.[41]

As a subtle hint as to how to read the anagram of the title, Rushdie displays the word Simurg as well as its archaic and pre-Avestan form, Saëna. In the Avesta,[42] the word Saëna was translated as eagle or falcon.[43] The simultaneous reference to Simurg and Saëna at this early stage in the progression of the novel sets up an equation between the protagonist, Flapping Eagle, Saëna, Simurg, and Grimus, and hence reflects the final merging of Flapping Eagle and Grimus.

The significance of the title,[44] however, is not fully revealed until chapter fifty-four. In the previous chapter, the reader learns that Grimus is an anagram of Simurg;[45]

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[41]Salman Rushdie, Grimus (1975; rpt. London: Granada, 1982), p.48.

[42]The Zoroastrian Holy book.

[43]Mohammad Moïn, Farhang-e Moïn, Vol.V (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1967), p.846.

[44]Although Rushdie refers specifically to the Myth of the Mountain of Kâf as it is used in The Conference of the Birds, he also evokes its use in other literary sources, such as the Zend Avesta or the Shah Nameh.

[45]Grimus, p.211.

the allusion to Attar's mystical poem is then explained in what amounts to a summary of The Conference of the Birds:

> It's not his real name, Grimus. He told us so freely. He changed it from something unpronounceable when he arrived in this country some thirty years ago. True to himself, his adopted name is derived anagrammatically from a mythical bird: the Simurg...the Simurg, he told us eagerly, is the Great Bird. It is vast, all-powerful and singular. It is the sum of all other birds. There is a Sufi poem in which thirty birds set out to find the Simurg on the mountain where he lives. When they reach the peak, they find that they themselves are, or rather have become, the Simurg. The name, you see, means thirty birds. Fascinating. Fascinating. The myth of the Mountain of Kâf.[46]

All references to the myth of the mountain of Kâf are ultimately integrated into the plot of Grimus and the fate of its protagonist is revealed to be a palindrome--an inversion of the structure of The Conference of the Birds. Unlike the birds in Attar's poem, Flapping Eagle sets out on his journey to counteract the effects of a potion which has granted him eternal life. In the final scene of the novel, Flapping Eagle once again reverses the myth and resists an annihilation of his "self." In fact, even after the personalities of Flapping Eagle and Grimus have merged, the former strives for a separate identity: "There is still an I. An I within me that is not him."[47] This is a far cry from the resigned reunion of the thirty birds of Attar's poem.

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[46]Ibid., pp.222-23.

[47]Ibid., p.270.

The process by which the reader arrives at an understanding of the overall structure of Rushdie's novel is similar to that followed in deciphering a puzzle. This very act of reading is thematized in a passage in Chapter Eight: Virgil Jones is seen busying himself with a jigsaw puzzle. While he attempts to explain the nature of Calf Island (Kâf) to Flapping Eagle, he accidentally scatters the pieces of the puzzle on the floor. As Flapping Eagle is frustrated in his efforts to put together the puzzle, and by extension to grasp the mysteries of Calf Island, Virgil Jones declares triumphantly: "The jigsaw cannot be completed...That's my little joke."[48] On one level, like the pun in Attar's poem, Grimus is Rushdie's "little joke" with the reader. The "Grimus" of the title becomes a grimace, or an aside, to the reader who has witnessed the unfolding of the plot only to discover that the plot itself is about the making of the anagram, Grimus.

Anagram making or rearrangement of literary sources is, indeed, the motivating structural principle of Grimus. In Chapter Eighteen the device itself is laid bare; the passage in question concerns the creatures which inhabit one of the imaginary worlds of Grimus, "Gorfs," an anagram of "frogs:" "The Gorfic planet is sometimes called Thera. It winds its way around the star Nus in the Yawy Klim galaxy of the Gorfic Nirveesu. This area is the major component of the

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[48]Ibid., p.40.

zone sometimes termed the Gorfic Endimions."[49] A re-arrangement of this passage would read: "The Frogic planet is sometimes called Earth. It winds its way around the star Sun in the Milky Way galaxy of the Frogic Universe. This area is the major component of the zone sometimes termed the Frogic Dominions." While the reader is still struggling with the re-ordering of the letters of the previous passage, Rushdie directs attention to the principle behind its composition and by extension to the principle behind the composition of his entire work:

> The Gorfic obsession with anagram-making ranges from simple re-arrangement of word-forms to the exalted level of the Divine Game of Order. The game extends far beyond mere letter-puzzling; the vast mental powers of the Gorfs make it possible for them anagrammatically to alter their very environment and indeed their own physical make-up...The rules of the game are known as Anagrammar; and to hold the title of Magister Anagrammari is the highest desire of any living Gorf.[50]

Presented in this light, Grimus is an obsessive re-arrangement of word-forms and literary texts; it is an "anagrammatical" text whose structure is reminiscent of the multi-layered dimensions of Calf Island, which in Virgil Jones's description extends to all levels of reality: "...[you must concede] that an infinity of dimensions might exist, as palimpsests, upon and within and around our own,

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[49]Ibid., p.68.

[50]Ibid.

without our being in any wise able to perceive them."[51] In this archetypal expression of the doctrine of "world and word as palimpsest," Rushdie creates a linguistic, thematic, and structural rewriting of other texts.[52]

It should be pointed out, however, that the success of Rushdie's literary collage relies upon wider knowledge of literature on the part of his readers. They are called upon to recognize allusions to The Poetic Edda, the Communist Manifesto, The Divine Comedy, Shakespeare's texts, as well as Persian and Indian myths.[53] Through his experiments with language, Rushdie also requires his readers to reflect upon the larger context from which his work emerges.

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[51]Ibid., p.55. [My emphasis]

[52]Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody would be applicable in this instance: "Parody...is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text." A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms (New York: Methuen, 1985), p.6.

[53]In his first experiment with the novel Rushdie is eager to create a new audience in the sense described by Eco in the "Postscript to The Name of the Rose": "If there is a difference, it lies between the text that seeks to produce a new reader and the text that tries to fulfill the wishes of the readers already to be found in the street. In the latter case we have the book written, constructed, according to an effective, mass-production formula; the author carries out a kind of market analysis and adapts his work to its results...But when a writer plans something new, and conceives a different kind of reader, he wants to be, not a market analyst, cataloguing expressed demands, but rather, a philosopher, who senses the patterns of the Zeitgeist. He wants to reveal to his public what it should want, even if it does not know it. He wants to reveal the reader to himself." Umberto Eco, "Postscript to The Name of the Rose," trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, 1984), pp.48-9.

In his later fiction, Rushdie has moved away from the degree of experimentation witnessed in Grimus, yet he has maintained an interest in asserting his own literary and cultural heritage. It is, therefore, not surprising that in her discussion of post-colonial Indian writing in English Bharati Mukherjee would cite Rushdie's work as the most representative example of the new genre:

> Rushdie's work is primarily about establishing one's identity by indenting one's language on the ruins of the old. For him colonialism and English are bonus; this gives him two survival kits instead of one. His mimic-man character is a hollow man who wears a three-piece suit to hide a literal hole in his body, a hole out of which words drain out, one can also stuff the hole with new words.[54]

As the analysis of Grimus and The Book of Absent People reveals, both Modarressi and Rushdie have referred to Attar's The Conference of the Birds. This is not mere coincidence. The example both authors have followed is one in which many traditions have been brought together in a literary creation. As a mystic, Attar had already overstepped the boundaries of Muslim orthodoxy. In writing his allegorical poem he defied the norms anew by making use of a Zoroastrian legend. The end result, a mystic parable, was accordingly an expression of Attar's own aesthetic ambitions. Attar's boldness of vision is precisely what Rushdie, Modarressi, and writers like them hope to emulate.

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[54]"Mimicry and Reinvention," p.155.

The linguistic experiments they carry out are a subtle response to Eurocentrism which simultaneouly draws them closer to their step-mother tongue. The bridge of tongues these writers create can, therefore, bring about a type of poetic synthesis of East and West which is not yet reflected in reality.

Chapter VII

From Introspection to Satire

> Dead drunk, not like a common sot, one day
> Nasir-i-Khusraw went to take the air.
> Hard by a dung dung-heap he espied a grave
> And straightway cried, 'O ye who stand and stare,
> Behold the world! Behold its luxuries!
> Its dainties here-- the fools who ate them here![1]

At the other end of the spectrum, set against those who have in various ways attempted to come to terms with the Western conceptions of themselves, there is another group of Eastern writers who not only question Western stereotypes of the East but also rather cynically refuse to believe that their eradication will lead to better mutual understanding. This last form of response is to be found in satirical treatments of East-West encounters such as Sadegh Hedayat's "The Caravan of Islam," Iraj Pezeshkzad's My Dear Uncle Napoleon, Bapsi Sidhwa's The Crow Eaters and Aziz Nesin's "Civilization Spare Part." These texts need not be separated from the other types of fiction examined previously; thematically, they have much in common with the texts which were examined in Chapter Five in that, the

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[1]Blasphemous verses ascribed to Nasir-i-Khuraw, quoted in translation by Edward G. Browne in A Literary History of Persia Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p.243.

satirical approach notwithstanding, this last genre of response also focuses on the question of identity. Yet their adherence to a common perspective on xenophobia as a universal phenomenon makes them a noteworthy sub-group.

"The Caravan of Islam" is presented in the form of the diary of an Arab journalist who accompanies a Muslim missionary delegation from Saudi Arabia to Europe. The first episode, which consists of an account of a meeting held before the departure of the mission, is intended as a mockery of the Muslim clergy's political ambitions. Divested of all political power in their native lands, the delegates set out to convert the infidels of Europe and to establish centers for "Islamic propaganda." Among their objectives is:

> To make the learning of Arabic obligatory. The infidels should acquire sufficient knowledge of Arabic to recite the Koran in suitable form. If they do not, however, grasp the meaning of what they recite, there should be no cause for alarm. In fact, it is preferable that they remain ignorant of the meaning.[2]

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[2]Sadegh Hedayat, "The Caravan of Islam" (Paris: Organisation des mouvements nationalistes des universitaires, chercheurs et intellectuels Iraniens, 1982), p.17. This text has not been translated into English. In fact, it has been largely ignored by Hedayat's critics. In his comprehensive bibliography of Hedayat's works, The Fiction of Sadegh Hedayat (Lexington, Kentucky: Mazda, 1984), Iraj Bashiri makes no reference to it. The translations are my own. The passage in the original reads:

اجباری کردن لسان وضبط صرف ونحو آن تعبد که کفار قرآن را با تجوید کامل وقواعد مفصل
وصل وعلامات کاملا صحیح بزبان عربی تلاوت نکنند. اما اگر معنی آنرا نفهمند عیبی ندارد. البته بهتر
است که نفهمند.

As shortly after their arrival in Berlin the treasurer absconds with the funds, the clergy are never given an opportunity to try out their plans. But their adventures in Europe shed new light on European attitudes towards the East.

While stranded in Berlin the delegates receive two offers of employment: one from the owner of a zoo and another from the director of a circus. Pressed by their financial needs the Muslims accept the first offer. In the zoo they are put on display and attract crowds of spectators. That is to say, like animals, they are reduced to mere objects to be photographed and talked about.[3] Ironically, however, the Muslims are not offended by the treatment they receive and learn to profit from the European mania for exoticism; they are interviewed, photographed and perform prayers for a fee. Ultimately, they delude both the European observers and their compatriots, who mistake the appearance of the missionaries in numerous European newspapers for the success of their propaganda. This new wave of enthusiasm brings the delegates another form of financial success; more funds are sent from Muslim nations to expand what they believe to be a mission in Europe. This time, however, the missionaries decide to invest the money in a tavern in Paris. It is in

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[3]This description is reminiscent of the open market scene in Georg Büchner's Woyzeck: "Sehn die Kreatur, wie sie Gott gemacht: nix, gar nix. Sehn Sie jetzt die Kunst: geht aufrecht, hat Rock und Hosen, hat ein Säbel! Der Aff ist Soldat; 's ist noch nit viel unterste Stuf von menschlichen Geschlecht." (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1978), p.10.

this location that the journalist finds the remaining delegates and interviews them for the last time.

In the final episode, the entire mission is revealed to have been carefully planned by the delegates as a means of deceiving Muslims and Europeans alike; as they raise their glasses to "the success of the caravan of Islam," the missionaries proudly confess that they had expected a favourable reception in Europe but that their victory had been beyond their expectations. But if the Muslim missionaries are shown as greedy and calculating manipulators, the manner of behaviour and the motivations of their Western observers are also questioned. One of the last questions the journalist asks the former clergy concerns the reputation of Islam in Europe and the effect their conduct might have on European scholarly writings on Islam. In response, those present unanimously agree that "all of that [European writing on Islam] is a vehicle for imperialism. These books are published to placate us and to better manipulate us."[4]

Hedayat's satire is directed towards the two opposing poles of Iranian society: those who believe in the benevolence of the West and others, more weary of the West,

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[4]Ibid., p.40.

آنهم برای سیاست استعماری است. این کتاب دستوری است که برای دوستان ما نوشته میشود تا بهتر کارمان بشود.

who blindly place their trust in their own religion.[5] Because of mutual distrust between two cultures, moreover, Hedayat believes that East and West will always remain apart. He not only sees the dialectic of the self and the other as the modus operandi of East-West relations but also predicts that it will always remain the norm. As reflected in the words of one of the delegates, the synthesis of East and West, is in Hedayat's view not even desirable:

> Do you remember what Taj used to say of the philosophy of Islam, of Heaven and Hell? In the other world Muslim men would be given an angel who would have her feet in the East and her head in the West...I

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[5]Hedayat made no secret of his hatred for religious, especially Muslim, influence in Iran. In Chapter Five, I have referred to his statement on the type of restrictions he believed Arab-Islamic influence to have placed on Iranian life. In his novel, The Blind Owl, we find passages such as: "A few days ago she brought me a prayer-book with half-an-inch of dust on it. I had no use, not only for prayer-books, but for any sort of literature that expressed the notions of the rabble. What need had I of their nonsense and lies?...As for mosques, the muezzin's call to prayer, the ceremonial washing of the body and rinsing of the mouth, not to mention the pious practice of bobbing up and down in honour of a high and mighty Being, the omnipotent Lord of all things, with whom it was impossible to have a chat except in the Arabic language-- these things left me completely cold." (p.88)

چند روز پیش یک کتاب دعا برایم آورده بود که رویش یک وجب خاک نشسته بود. نه تنها کتاب دعا بلکه هیچ جور کتاب واذ نشته و اطاقه رجاله ها به درد نمیخورد. چه اعتیاجی به درس مذهبی آنها داشتم. آیا خود من نتیجه یک گذشته نسلهای گذشته نبودم و تجربیات سوروثی آنها در من باقی نبود؟ آیا گذشته در خود من نبود؟ ولی هیچ وقت نه سجده و نه صدای اذان و نه وضو و اقع وقف انداختن و دولاد راست شدن در مقابل یک قادر متعال و صاحب اختیار مطلق نه بایه بزبان نه بالا اختلاط کرده در من تأثیری نداشته است. (۴۲)

> prefer to do hard labour and not be granted the angel whose head and tail cannot be collected in one place.[6]

With less sarcasm, Iraj Pezeshkzad has also expressed doubt about the possibility of eliminating cultural prejudices in his extremely popular novel, My Dear Uncle Napoleon.[7] The novel is set during the Second World War and is a comic treatment of the popular Iranian belief that the British are always directly or indirectly involved in events which shape the history of their country. Ever since the Constitutional Revolution, during which the British lent support to the members of the Iranian clergy opposing the monarchy, Iranians have suspected the British of causing disruption in Iranian politics. As pointed out by Denis Wright, this fear of the British has not subsided even after the revolution of 1979:

> I should have liked, had I felt competent to do so, to write a final chapter analysing the popular Persian view of the English. What lies behind the love-hate feelings towards us of so many Persians?...Why, even, today, so many Persians instinctively attribute much of what happens in their country to the English...Why do so many of them today believe that the Ayatollah Khomeini enjoys British support and that one only has, as

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[6]Ibid.

یادت هست که تاج به میگفت بگو در آنه بیا بر و سلمان نوشته را بده هنگ پاسش در شدت و سرعش در مغرب است... من حاضرم اعمال شاه بگم ولی این نوشته را نده هنگ تا نام سرو تهش را جمع جور نکنم.

[7]Since its first publication in 1968, My Dear Uncle Napoleon has been reprinted eleven times; it was also adapted for television.

> they put it, to lift his beard to find "Made in England" printed underneath?[8]

Pezeshkzad capitalizes upon this national anxiety in his portrait of a retired serviceman who in his dotage, especially during the advance of the allied forces towards Iran, imagines himself a Napoleon-like figure. The title of Uncle Napoleon is bestowed upon him by relatives who, out of respect for his age and stature, humour his delusions of grandeur. In his long narrations inflicted upon family members, Napoleon gradually equates the skirmishes he had once witnessed in the South of Iran with the Napoleonic wars, and the tribal rebels become agents of the British Empire. In his increased paranoia, he begins to imagine that even those only remotely associated with the British, for instance his Indian neighbours, are spying on him. Uncle Napoleon's fear of the British so dominates his life that when he receives news that the allies are about to enter Tehran, he decides to flee the city:

> ...they will not wait. The British troops have mobilized towards Tehran. They may arrive any day now. Believe me I am not thinking of myself. I have always lived in danger and become accustomed to it. To quote Napoleon, "brave men are born of danger." I am merely concerned about my innocent children. I assure you the first thing the British will do in Tehran is to settle old accounts with me.[9]

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[8]Wright, p.XVI.

[9]Iraj Pezeshkzad, My Dear Uncle Napoleon (1968; rpt. London: Paka, n.d.), twelfth edition, p.175. The

By juxtaposing Uncle Napoleon's paranoid visions and the real threat, hardly perceived by the other characters, which the extended presence of the British posed to the political independence of Iran, Pezeshkzad demonstrates the extent to which myth and reality are intermingled in East-West relations. When an encounter between Uncle Napoleon and an Indian feigning to be an agent of the British[10] is orchestrated by relatives, the irony of the situation becomes clear; Uncle Napoleon is ridiculed by the same spectators who, years later, were to witness real confrontations between Iran and Britain. The Inglis-ha[11] Uncle Napoleon and his servant, Mash Ghasem, see in every "cross-eyed"[12] blond person in the neighborhood were indeed cause for concern in the post-war history of Iran.

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translations of this text are my own. The original text reads:

ولی آنا صبر نمیکنه. قشون انگلیس به طرف تهران حرکت کرده است... هیچ فایده نیست امروز یا فردا وارد تهران میشونه... باور کنید من خیلی خوشحال میشم. من با خطر زندگی کرده ام، با خطرها خو گرفته ام. به قول ناپلئون بردان نمیترسند ولی من به فکر بچه‌های کوچکم هستم... مطمئن باشید انگلیسها اولین کاری که بعد از ورود به تهران میکنند این است که حسابهای گذشته را با من تسویه کنند.

[10]Long after Uncle Napoleon's death, the narrator discovers that the same man was in reality an agent for the Germans.

[11]The plural of Englishman in Persian.

[12]Uncle Napoleon's servant is convinced that the dishonesty of the British has a clear manifestation in their physiognomy; he swears that every Englishman he has encountered is cross-eyed. In one episode he mistakes a man from the northern province of Gilan, unfortunate enough to have been both blond and cross-eyed, for an Englishman and attacks him in the market.

Underlying the comic tone in which Uncle Napoleon's negotiations are described is the general disbelief, also shared by the author, that Iran would ever be granted a status equal to that of Western powers. No doubt Pezeshkzad's own experiences as an Iranian diplomat[13] contributed to this skepticism. But even after the revolution, Pezeshkzad has maintained his cynicism. In the dedication to the twelfth edition of his novel, he joins his characters, Uncle Napoleon and Mash Ghasem, in a chorus:

> I always preferred Mash Ghasem to the other characters, for misfortune had distanced him from his beloved country of Ghiasabad. So allow me in memory of the eternal Mash Ghasem, Parviz Fannizadeh [the actor who played his role in the television series], to dedicate this book to all those who have been unwillingly separated from their own Ghiasabad, Iran.[14]

The Iranian Revolution, Pezeshkzad seems to imply, has redirected the age-old distrust of the British; the threat to Iran is no longer posed from foreign quarters but rather

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[13]The years in which My Dear Uncle Napoleon was composed, Pezeshkzad served as a diplomat in various Iranian embassies in Europe.

[14]Author's note.

مشاهم را از همه اینها بیشتر دوست داشتم، مشاهم غیاث آبادی که "مملکت" غیاث آباداش را از همه چیز و از همه جا قشنگ‌تر میدید و میخواست و از همه بهتر بود، از آن دور افتاده بود. پس اجازه میخواهم با یاد او از مشاهم جاودان، پرویز فنی‌زاده، این کتاب را اکنون به همه آنانکه از غیاث آباد بزرگ و عزیزشان، ایران، دور افتاده‌اند تقدیم کنم.

from within. He sees little difference between British imperialist ambitions in Iran and the present Iranian regime's policies which have internalized those same tendencies. In a collection of articles published after the revolution, "International Brats," Pezeshkzad is especially critical of those Iranians who fell prey to the rhetoric of revolution and accepted the new mask only to find themselves, shortly thereafter, in exile.[15] The title of one of these articles, "The Second Uncle Napoleon," is indicative of Pezeshkzad's continued pessimism; this second uncle Napoleon is a parody of today's political elite in Iran.

A similar type of cynical self-criticism is found in Bapsi Sidhwa's satirical portrait of the Parsis of India in The Crow Eaters. Recognizing the self-reflexive dimensions of the title, a phrase which refers to those who talk too much, Sidhwa initially attempts to temper her satire:

> Because of a deep-rooted admiration for my community-- and an enormous affection for its few eccentricities-- this work of fiction has been a labour of love. The nature of satire being to exaggerate, the incidents of this book do not reflect at all upon the integrity of a community whose scrupulous honesty and sense of honour are renowned.[16]

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[15]Many of the essays of this volume are devoted to the former president of the Islamic Republic, Bani Sadr, and the leaders of various revolutionary groups who having been forced into exile have had to publicly deny their earlier support for the revolution.

[16]Bapsi Sidhwa, The Crow Eaters (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), Author's Note.

Nevertheless, she proceeds to depict the political follies of her community in pre-independence India. By positioning themselves between the rulers, i.e. the British, and the native population of India, the Parsis become engaged in a dangerous political game originally intended to strengthen their position as a minority. These sentiments are echoed in the words of the protagonist, Faredoon Junglewalla:

> And where, if I may ask does the sun rise? No, not in the East. For us it rises-- and sets-- in the Englishman's arse. They are our sovereigns! Where do you think we'd be if we did not curry favour? Next to the nawabs, rajas and princelings, we are the great toadies of the British Empire! These are not ugly words, mind you. They are the sweet dictates of our delicious need to exist, to live and prosper in peace. Otherwise, where would we Parsis be? Cleaning out gutters with the untouchables--a dispersed pinch of snuff sneezed from the heterogeneous nostrils of India! Oh yes, in looking after our interests we have maintained our strength.[17]

Although this complacency bears fruit in so far as Faredoon and others who share his ambitions succeed in siding at once with the British, the Hindus, and Muslims, it backfires and makes the Parsis, at least psychologically, as dependent as the British on the logic of imperialism.

The contradictions do not become apparent until Faredoon and his family visit England. Prior to their departure Faredoon, his wife, Putli, and his mother-in law, Jerbanoo

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[17]Ibid., p.12.

fantasize about the exotic land from which their rulers originate and eagerly await a first-hand experience:

> To them England was a land of crowns and thrones; of tall, splendidly attired, cool-eyed noblemen and imposing, fair-haired ladies gliding past in gleaming carriages; of elegant lords in tall hats and tails, strolling with languid ladies who swept spotless waterfront promenades with trailing gowns, their gestures gracious and charming, marked by an exquisite reserve.[18]

Soon after their arrival in England, however, the group is disillusioned with the realities of England; they see the imperfections which they themselves had consented to overlook in India: "Where were the kings and queens, the lords and women with haughty, compelling eyes and arrogant mien? They realised in a flash that the superiority the British displayed in India was assumed, acquired from the exotic setting, like their tan."[19] The initial apathy which results from this realization is quickly transformed into a desire to test the superiority of the rulers.

It is Jerbanoo who takes it upon herself to subject the British she encounters to a set of trials. When, for example, Mrs Allen fails to perform according to the expected norms, Jerbanoo herself assumes the role of the tyrant. Her assumption is that if the British can no longer rule, they must be ruled by those more competent; the need for a domi-

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[18]Ibid., p.252.

[19]Ibid., p.253.

nant power is deeply-ingrained: "Poor Mrs Allen, closeted with Jerbanoo while the household frolicked about London, received the full blast of her scorn. Jerbanoo felt it demeaning to address such an inconsequential person as 'Mrs Allen,' and took to calling her hostess 'May-ree.' Mr Allen became 'Charlie.'"[20] The ensuing confrontations become a battle of wits in which neither side can claim victory. The British are horrified at Jerbanoo's seemingly unpredictable behaviour, while Jerbanoo becomes increasingly disenchanted with her experience of England.

What Sidhwa criticizes in the Parsis is their acquiescence to being "Orientalized." When it becomes evident that the British are to leave India, the Parsis reorient themselves and once again submit themselves to the powers-to-be: "We will stay where we are...let Hindus, Muslims, sikhs, or whoever, rule. What does it matter? The sun will continue to rise--and the sun continue to set--in their arses...!"[21] Like Hedayat and Pezeshkzad, Sidhwa believes that the fate of the Parsis as "subjects" is, at least, partially a consequence of their willingness to accept and even create cultural stereotypes. As she does not foresee changes in the traditional attitudes of the Parsis,[22] she,

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[20]Ibid., pp.254-55.

[21]Ibid., p.283.

[22]See Jessica Greenbaum's interview with Sidhwa in the June 1986 issue of The Houstonian Magazine, "Minority of One," pp.50-2.

too, is reluctant to predict new modes of cross-cultural exchange between East and West.

In his short story, "Civilization Spare Part," Aziz Nesin is apparently less concerned with cultural exchanges between East and West than with the influence of imported Western technology. Yet, as hinted in the title and further developed in the course of the story, the use or misuse of Western technology has clear implications for the culture of Turkey and, by extension, that of other Eastern nations.

The story, in some ways, echoes Jalal Al-e Ahmad's treatise Plagued by the West (see Chapter II); it actualizes Al-e Ahmad's fears of the Third World's dependence on Western machinery. The protagonist, Hamit Agha, once a successful farmer, is brought to ruin, when under pressure from relatives preoccupied with modernization, he replaces his old methods of farming with modern ones:

> When my son returned from the army, he said, 'Father, I learned how to drive. Let us buy a tractor,' he insisted. Just then my daughter came to the village with her husband...They too kept bothering me to buy a tractor. 'Children, what would be the good of it? Aren't two pair of oxen enough? They say I am backward-minded. My daughter pointed to the calendar page on the wall. 'Look, father,' she said. 'We're in the year 1955. This is the twentieth century, did you know that? My son-in-law gives an hour-long speech after every meal. 'We are in the machine age. To plow with a pair of oxen is a disgrace these days.'[23]

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[23]"Civilization Spare Part," trans. Janet Heineck in An Anthology of Modern Turkish Short Stories, ed Fahir Iz

This obsession with the purchase of the tractor exhibits the symptoms of what Al-e Ahmad has called Westitis, or the need to indiscriminately mimic the West. In retrospect, Hamit Agha admits to having succumbed to pressure from his family because he did not wish to single himself out as the only farmer in the neighborhood without a tractor: "was exhausted by the nagging in the house. 'I'll buy it,' I said. Since even Memish Hüseyin had bought one, why should I be behind everybody?"[24]

The disastrous outcome of the purchase can, on the one hand, be blamed on the Turkish farmer's lack of appreciation of "the machine." Hamit Agha continues to equate the tractor with his oxen, endows it with a personality, and expects it to perform in the same manner:

> "If it were an Arab horse, it would be dying of exhaustion. This monster structure, this infidel invention-- did you think it was an Arab horse?" We push, but it doesn't move. Like a donkey that sees water, it doesn't stir from its spot. How I missed the black ox! When you told it, "Come on, go!" it would uproot rock and mountain to go.[25]

When the tractor breaks down and needs spare parts, Hamit Agha expects to have to replace it as if it were one of his oxen. His attitude confirms his earlier suspicion that the new machinery only disrupts the well-established routine of

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(Chicago and Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978), pp.193-4.

[24]Ibid., p.194.

[25]Ibid., p.197.

the past. In other words, his failure to integrate the old and the new ways is to be attributed to his unwillingness to change and to adapt.

On the other hand, and this is a more serious charge against the East, Hamit Agha's problems are to blamed on the lack of a coherent system which would provide a smooth transition from the old to the new. The government agencies which all too eagerly endorse Hamit Agha's bank loans, and put him hopelessly in debt, are ill prepared for maintaining the machinery:

> A screw fell out-- five hundred liras. A thousand liras for a part the size of a finger. A bolt comes loose-- a thousand liras. Its chain breaks. Spare parts couldn't be found. A patch here, a patch there. That blessed tractor started to look like my trousers. While it plowed the ground, it shook all over like someone who has malaria. Everywhere in our field one can find a screw, a bolt, an iron bar, a shaft, or a chain.[26]

Even more incriminating is the government's approach to the problems of modernization. While the tractors are available for sale to Turkish farmers, the spare parts and the experts to work on them have to be brought from the West: "'We have ordered it from America. Until it comes, we are setting up a factory here, too. Wait a bit. We'll be turning out parts like rain.' said he. 'I can't wait, but the bank can't wait. You tell the bank to wait.' said I."[27]

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[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p.198.

In this manner, not only the farmers but the entire nation become increasingly dependent upon the West without having an alternative available. This is precisely the dilemma Al-e Ahmad attempts to resolve in his treatise. In Aziz Nesin's short story, the farmer finds his own suitable solution:

> ...I could see that it wouldn't work. I gathered my son, daughter, son-in-law, and wife. "Come on, folks," said I, "let me show you how to repair this thing.' I picked up a sledgehammer. I drove those people of mine like a flock of sheep. We came to the wreck. I struck the steering wheel and said, "Take that, you twentieth century," I struck the engine and said, "Take that, civilization." I struck the driving wheel with the sledgehammer and said, "Take that. This is your spare part."[28]

By underlining Hamit Agha's relief ("It's as though I've been born again"[29]), Aziz Nesin heightens the irony of the fate of others who are still bound to their slave-like dependence on the West. At the same time, the ending Aziz Nesin suggests is far from being satisfactory. He is not optimistic that either the East or the West will seek and find a resolution to a persistent dilemma which threatens to widen the gulf between the two cultures.

The cynicism of Sidhwa, Pezeshkzad, Hedayat, and Nesin reflects deeply-rooted problems which are not to be easily dismissed or overcome. Far from undermining or opposing challenges to Western attitudes towards the East, these

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[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., p.199.

writers appear to be reluctant to find blame only in the West. Through irony and satire, they insist that new relations cannot be achieved by merely reversing the old approaches. They also call for a much more intense self-examination on the part of the East. In this sense, they are not unlike the other Eastern writers and scholars who advocate change, but they are more cautious in their approach and appear to stress the need for pragmatic measures.

Conclusion

> The tyranny of silence shall be broken--
> New shining words by us, the poets, spoken;
> Whereas a diver threads dull pearls upon a string
> We choose the words which soar--and give them wing.[1]

The works examined in this study bear witness to the fallacy of the image of a reticent Orient. As seen in the previous chapters, Eastern writers and scholars have indeed realized and acted upon the need to come to terms with the West and, even more importantly, with Western perceptions of themselves. Weighed against the outwardly directed challenges of scholars like Said and Kabbani, the introspection and self-questionings of writers like Hedayat and Rushdie are equally significant and necessary attempts at redefining the position of the East vis-à-vis the West. Whether this trend towards reversing the traditions of Orientalism will gain the type of institutional support enjoyed by the discipline of Orientalism remains to be seen. At present, however, the movement faces major obstacles both within itself and in its reception in the West.

Our inquiry into the variety of responses to Orientalism has revealed that, for the most part, Eastern scholars have abandoned the singularity of vision with which

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[1]Qulzum, trans. J. C. E. Owen, quoted in Modern Islamic Literature from 1800 to the Present, p.181.

traditional Orientalists approach the study of the East. This expansion of perspective has certainly created an atmosphere more conducive to cross-cultural studies. But in the multiplicity of voices heard there are hints of discord and internal strife. In the introduction and Chapter Two I have discussed the militant branch of the movement whose ultimate representative is the Iranian revolution--perhaps also one of the most effective forms of response to the West.[2] For this reason, the course of its development can shed light on the future of the movement as a whole. Still misunderstood in the West as a form of religious fanaticism, the Iranian revolution has, nevertheless, forced many "specialists" to reconsider their preconceptions of the Islamic East. In this particular phenomenon, at least, the East has demonstrated an ability to challenge the West and pose itself as a threat. By the same token, however, such confrontational attitudes may further widen the gulf between East and West.

After an initial phase during which a larger segment of the Iranian intellegentsia embraced the revolutionary ideals, the Iranian Revolution has failed to attract supporters among moderates either in the East or in the West. Born out of deep-seated and legitimate resentments, the revolution has created its own set of stereotypes of the West. Labels

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[2]It should not be forgotten that the Iranian revolutionary movement adhered to the motto of "neither East, nor West." In this sense, it should also be seen as a form of response to the self-image of the East.

such as the "Great Satan" and the "decadent West" naturally come to mind. Such slogans are integral to a movement of this nature and magnitude, but they also have the power to undermine the very goals of the revolution.

An interesting example of the internal contradictions brought about by such rhetoric was unfolded in two consecutive issues of the Islamic Republic's official literary magazine, Kayhan-e Farhangi. In its November 1986 issue, an article was devoted to Wole Soyinka's winning of the Nobel Prize. Soyinka was hailed as a "Third-World" writer committed "to the cause of the oppressed."[3] In the next issue, however, one of the readers objected to the journal's admitting Soyinka to the ranks of committed writers precisely because he has received recognition from the West. The letter to the editor is worth quoting at some length:

> Let us not forget that the Nobel Prize has traditionally been awarded to a select group of people--certainly not those who have distanced themselves from Western imperialism. Need I remind your readers that Soyinka is a Protestant who sided against his Muslim brothers during the Biafran War? He was also imprisoned during the same period as a traitor. Moreover, as a writer he has turned away from the traditions of his own people: instead of Yoruba or Arabic, a language accessible to a larger segment of the population of the African continent, he has chosen to write in English.
> I do not wish to belittle Soyinka's literary endeavors or call into question the merits of the Nobel Prize. On the contrary, I welcome the possibility of a fair

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[3]Anonymous, in "Notes and Remarks" of Vol. 3 (November 1986) of Kayhan-e Farhangi, pp. 43-4.

> competition between Western writers and their Muslim counterparts. Yet I hesitate to share your enthusiasm. Were Begin and Sadat not among winners of the Nobel Prize?[4]

This is a case in which stereotyping demands clear-cut definitions and denies the possibility of any flexibility of approach. Soyinka, whose works have been of interest to the readers of Kayhan-e Farhangi, must necessarily be chastised after being identified with the West. In its narrow-mindedness, the statement quoted above is reminiscent of the "Orientalist discourse."

Unfortunately the letter in Kayhan-e Farhangi is not an isolated example. In Chapter Two, in publications such as Orientalism, Islam and Islamists, we have encountered a similar lack of critical perspective. The success of the Ira-

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[4]Seyyed Mohammad Ali Sajjadieh, "How the Winners of the Nobel Prize are Selected," Kayhan-e Farhangi 3 (December 1986), p.36. The translation is my own and has also appeared in "Iranian Reflections on Soyinka," in African Literature Association Bulletin 13, 4 (Spring 1987), pp.10-11.

اگر توجه کنیم که عمل سوئیتها مبنی پروتستان است و در جریان تجزیه طلبی بنیانزا، که شورش مسیحیان علیه مسلمانان این سامان بوده، سوئیتها به نفع سرخنت شورشیان وجوه فعالیت می کرده و بهمین دلیل به اتهام خیانت فرخوانده شده است و اگر توجه کنیم که وی به جای زبانهای اروپائی و... زبان عربی و زبان مسلط مسلمین افریقا) و نیز بزبانهای بومی دیگر، زبان انگلیسی را برگزیده است بشدت به دلایل اعطای این جایزه پی میبریم این نه شکی نیست و نه اعتقاد او عمل سوئیتها هستند و نه اعتقاد من دادن جایزه و نه یک افریقایی فقیر میکنم حتی این شکل اعطای جایزه، بیش از اعتقاد من آن به یک نویسنده آنچنانی امریکایی یا روسی است (چه برسد به اعطای جایزه صلح به بگین و سادات که لذت یاد هانی رود)... لطفا به هر حال فراموش نکنید که منافع جهان استعماری غرب را در نظر دارند و چه بسا مسلمین نیز به نوبه خود جوایزی از این رده را باب نمایند.

nian revolution as a popular movement has tempted many scholars to embrace its ideals wholeheartedly. But this type of response too closely echoes the rhetoric of biased Orientalism and is in danger of becoming nothing but "reverse-Orientalism." Were such attitudes to become prevalent among Eastern scholars, they would ultimately undermine the validity of a movement capable of suggesting genuine alternatives. In a different context, The Global Populists: Third World Nations and World-Order Crises, Fouad Ajami has argued that mere opposition to the status quo (i.e., the traditional manner of interaction between East and West) does not guarantee change. The ultimate challenge with which the East is, and will be, confronted is its ability to find a new pragmatic approach to an old dilemma:

> In the global context, genuine populists must demonstrate that they are made of different political stuff; they should not just be frustrated miniature replicas of the powers they denounce. They must demonstrate that their world, should it ever come about, would be based upon different visions and social relationships...[5]

Added to this challenge is the attitude of some Easterners who argue cynically that neither the East nor the West is capable of creating a new atmosphere of exchange. As seen in the previous chapter, however, this type of cynicism is not, in itself, disruptive to the goals of other

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[5]Fouad Ajami, The Global Populists: Third-World Nations and World-Order Crises, Research Monographs 41 (Princeton: Center of International Studies, 1974), p.36.

Eastern writers who have undertaken re-examinations of East-West relations. In fact, if this pessimism is not perceived merely as a challenge to the task of the latter group, it could provide a much-needed balance to the more naïve responses discussed in the initial stage of this argument.

Perhaps the most disheartening issue to be confronted by those who have voiced their opposition to the traditional study of the East is that classical Orientalism has, by and large, ignored the challenges issued to it and has continued to reinforce its discourse. A case in point is Bernard Lewis's The Muslim Discovery of Europe, published in 1982. I have referred to this book in Chapter One, but here I wish to examine it in the light of the reception of modern Eastern scholarship and fiction in the West.

In his introduction Lewis seems to announce a new perspective:

> Much has been written in recent years about the discovery of Islam by Europe. In most of these discussions, however, the Muslim has appeared as the silent and passive victim. But the relationship between Islam and Europe, whether in war or peace, has always been a dialogue, not a monologue: the process of discovery was mutual. Muslim perceptions of the West are no less deserving of study than Western perceptions of Islam, and have received less attention.[6]

Although Lewis proposes to study the nature of the dialogue between East and West, he fails to abandon the role of the

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[6]Lewis, p.12.

zealous moderator who reduces the exchange to a monologue. We leave the introduction hoping to learn of "the Muslim discovery of Europe" through Arab, Persian, and Turkish sources. Yet references to such sources are limited and carefully selected to support the author's preconceptions. Of the period following the Middle Ages, for example, we read: "But if the Mohammadans would not come to Europe, Europe was preparing to come to Mohammadans."[7] This statement might, at first, be read as an inaccurate representation of the history of Muslim travel in Europe and, therefore, be classified as poor scholarship. Hidden in it, however, is a more disturbing level of deliberate misrepresentation.

In the interest of a stylish turn of phrase, Lewis uses the term Mohammadan which he knows to be incorrect[8] and thereby unveils his own ideological biases. The phrase is perhaps best understood as an attempt at preserving a style of thought[9] which permits Lewis to manipulate history. It is in this spirit that he chooses to overlook facts and fall back upon generalizations: "Very occasionally we hear of a Muslim-born interpreter, whom chance or more likely mischance-- had provided with an opportunity to learn a

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[7]Ibid., p.95.

[8]Muslims object to the use of the term Mohammadan, for it equates the role of the prophet Mohammad with that of Christ. The word Muslim, on the other hand, refers to the followers of the faith rather than worshippers of a prophet.

[9]"...the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West." Orientalism, p.5.

foreign language."[10] For Bernard Lewis, therefore, the writing of the history of the Muslim world becomes a matter of stylistic self-indulgence.

Although the focus of Lewis's study is the earlier phase of contacts between the Muslim world and Europe, in the concluding remarks he feels obliged to expand his thesis to embrace the modern Orient. It is the ease with which in one short paragraph he sums up the complex histories of contemporary Muslim nations that reflects poorly on the influence of modern Eastern scholarship:

> The old attitude of disdain and lack of interest was, for a while, changing, at least among some elements of the ruling elite. At last Muslims were turning towards Europe, if not with admiration, then with respect, and perhaps fear, and paying it the supreme compliment of imitation. A new phase in the discovery was beginning; it has continued almost until our own time.[11]

Whether or not we assume that Bernard Lewis and other Orientalists like him[12] are ignorant of the extent and nature of Eastern literary and scholarly writing on East-West

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[10]Lewis, p.78.

[11]Ibid., 308.

[12]In an article entitled "Modern Arab Attitudes to the West," John Parker draws conclusions similar to those of Lewis. The article is published in The Glass Curtain between Asia and Europe: A Symposium on the Historical Encounters and the Changing Attitudes of the Peoples of the East and West, ed. Raghavan Iyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp.150-65.

interactions, the dominion of their Eurocentric views is not diminished.

When V. S. Naipaul, who claims to have some attachments to the East, writes of his journey through Muslim countries his impressions reflect presuppositions he has naïvely inherited from the West. The very title of his work, Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey, is intended to signal his entry into a remote and incomprehensible region. Witnessing Iran in the days following the revolution, he lacks the subtlety of mind to grasp the divergent forces behind the revolution. Therefore, he sees only religious fanaticism: "The Ayatollah Khomeini, I felt, had been revealed slowly. As the revolution developed his sanctity and authority appeared to grow and at the end were seen to have been absolute all along."[13] Relying upon intuitions and insight gained through Western media, Naipaul assumes the authority to reduce an historical movement to a failed act of mimicry:

> What had attracted these Iranians to the United States and the civilization it represented? Couldn't they say? The attraction existed; it was more than a need for education and skills. But the attraction wasn't admitted; and in that attraction, too humiliating for an old and proud people to admit, there lay disturbance--expressed in dandyism, mimicry, boasting, and rejection.[14]

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[13]V.S. Naipaul, Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey (Markham, Ontario: Penguin, 1981), p.14.

[14]Ibid., p.17.

The parallels between this statement and Lewis's evaluations of the modern Orient are alarmingly obvious. What is even more appalling is the popularity of writers like Naipaul who, because of their so-called bond with the East, claim to speak as knowledgeable experts. It is, therefore, not surprising that Western scholarship has systematically and conveniently ignored the voice of its refuters. But what is surprising is the lack of interest and curiosity on the part of the West[15] to acquaint itself with the expressions of modern Eastern culture and literature. In this sense, modern Orientalists have much to learn from predecessors like E.G. Browne and Sir William Jones, who devoted themselves to the study of particular aspects of Oriental life and customs. Their analysis may not have always been accurate but it was, nevertheless, closer to the realities of the Orient they observed first-hand. It is to be noted that such scholars often spent extended periods of time in regions of the Orient and were fluent in the languages of those lands they attempted to describe. For them, the Orient did not merely constitute a field of political and strategic interest.

Yet the task of overcoming the barriers between East and West, initially instituted and encouraged by the West, should not rest solely with the East. The work of the Eastern writers and scholars can become effective only when it

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[15]I believe the dilemma is not restricted to an academic environment, although it is more acute in the universities.

is reciprocated by the West. That is to say, the Western world must also open itself up to more comprehensive studies of Eastern cultural and literary traditions. It is no longer possible to claim that the discipline of Orientalism alone bears the responsibility for the present lack of understanding of Eastern scholarship and fiction; fields of study such as comparative literature have also been traditionally reluctant to venture beyond the literatures of the West. When in comparative literature room is allowed for the study of Eastern literatures, frequently it is sequestered from mainstream European literatures. The basic flaw in such an approach is that it once again hands over the study of the Orient to the traditional specialists and proves that the East is indeed a career. To say nothing of contributing to an already flawed and inadequate knowledge of the Orient. This particular problem has consequences for both the students and their instructors; they will forever reinforce and encourage each other's shortcomings.

We cannot hope for perceptible changes in relations between the Orient and the Occident unless we begin re-examination of the deficiencies of our own realm of study. In the days when comparatists eagerly adopt the most recent trends in scholarship from various European quarters, it is puzzling that an area as significant as Eastern literary and critical tradition is still deemed marginal. Were we also to adopt the alternative approach proposed by Abdelkebir Khatibi and allow ourselves to be "à l'écoute de toute

parole--d'où qu'elle vienne,"[16] perhaps there would be fewer cultural misapprehensions. In the absence of such understanding, the East seems justified both in its verbal assault on the West and its self-questionings.

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[16]Maghreb pluriel, p.63.

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